

川上 稔

イラスト・さとやす (TENKY)

GENESISシリーズ

境界線上の ホライゾン

Ⅲ

上

電撃文庫

installation



installation

■ Mitotsudaira Nate ■

As leader of Mito Matsudaira, second in line to the Far East, a resident of the Française, a knight, a meat-lover, and whatnot, Mitotsudaira is a busy girl.

Part of the reason she has so many titles and descriptions is because she had been used by so many people.

She is a diligent person and thus actually deals with all of those problems people present her with, but that is what will be dealt with in the coming volume.

She has inherited the name of Mito Mitsukuni, but the historical Lord Mitsukuni was also born into a difficult situation and that is another area in which they coincide.

As a character, she is the high-class girl.

However, she is not the obedient type. She instead has a "noble" image that leads her to constantly challenge things.

Simply put, she is a wolf.

And mixing in the human side also gives her some vulnerability and other issues.

In Horizon, the character designs are divided between the "casually-worn uniform" type, the "work-related personal clothes" type, and the "showy personal clothes" type.

Mito falls into the last category and is only a step behind Kimi.

Her bangs are her fangs, her hair decorations are wolf ears, and the giant rolls in the back are the high-class side of her.

Ya-san's comment when he saw my rough left quite an impression on me:

"Are you serious? I mean, I'm fine with it, but still."

I think Mito's design was when it really hit me that I wanted to try some designs not seen in City or Chronicle.

Her outfit is a dress based on the Hexagone Française uniform modified for the Far East hard points and to handle the silver chains. A lot went into it.

Her frame is slender and the rest of her design follows the idea that "large = luxurious" and includes the chains and obelisks used to tie up beasts.

(Kawakami Minoru)



—Are you there?

III

上

川上 稔

イラスト・さとやす (TENKY)

horizon

on the Middle
of Nowhere
episode.03



character

2



Name: Houjou Ujinao

Faction: Houjou Association of Indian States

Position: Chancellor and Student Council President

Style: Versatile Spell User

Special: Older Brown Girl

Name: Satomi Yoshiyasu

Faction: Satomi Academy

Position: Student Council President

Style: Heavy God of War Pilot

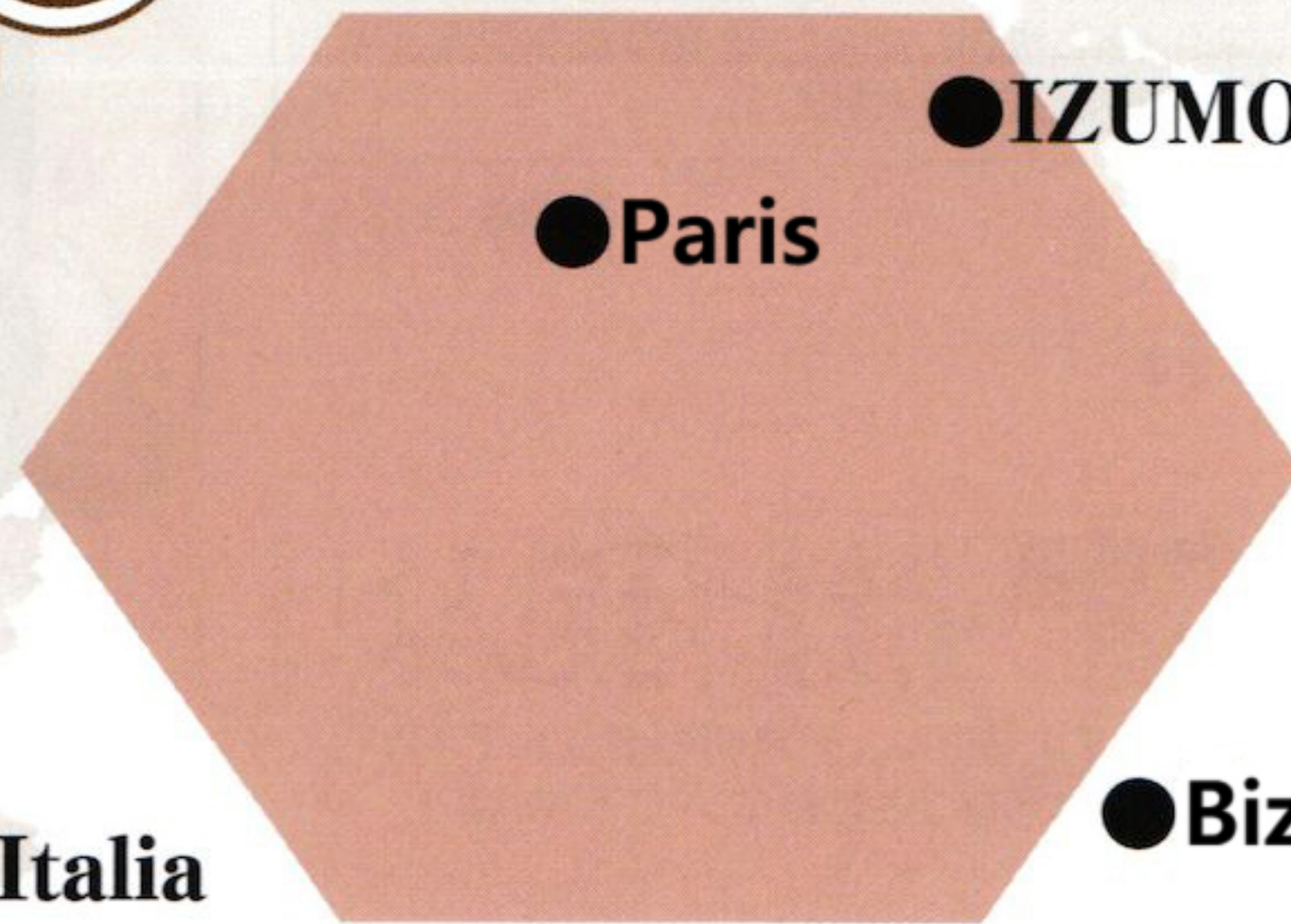
Special: Diligent Victim





4

world



●IZUMO

●Paris

●M.H.R.R.

●Bizen

●K.P.A.Italia

Unlike M.H.R.R. which has an emperor and K.P.A. Italia which has the pope, Hexagone Française had no national symbol and thus had little influence.

But it raised its production by clearing its land and it developed in other ways while the other nations were ruined by wars and internal fighting. After its greatest threat of the Hundred Years' War, Hexagone Française had gained power as a nation and gathered strength in Europe without focusing on the New World and finally gained King Louis XIV.

Point!



Name: Hanami

• “Hexagone Française” •

Hexagone Française is a nation in the center of Europe. It was originally a portion of Charlemagne's empire after he gathered Europe which had become a lawless area after the fall of the Roman empire. It eventually broke off into the current Hexagone Française.



Name: Mary

Did something happen?

666

Ahh, I think this is something Mary will have trouble understanding, so take care of it, Crossunite.

Push!



·Scarred: "???"



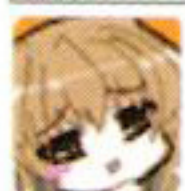
·Almost everyone: "At least deny it!"



·Asama: "Th-that's right, everyone. Masazumi is new to this, so don't say anything that will worry her too much! We can save that for later!"



·Vice President: "What did that laugh at the end mean!?"



·Wise Sister: "Now, now. You all need to stop taking pride in being victims. Right now, we need to greet Masazumi. Heh heh heh."



·10ZO: "Th-that was fast! This is progressing way too fast!"



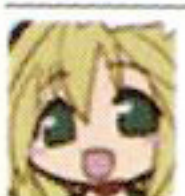
·Hori-ko: "Come here a moment. I will deal with this. That is an order."



·Me: "Eh!? S-sexual performance anxiety!?"



·Silver Wolf: "U-um, so Masazumi will be feeling the same performance anxiety I have been feeling recently?"



·Marube-ya: "Yeah, I think you'll have a lot forced on you and a lot of horrible things said to you, but it's your fault for showing an opening. Be careful, okay!?"



·Uqui: "Whatever happens, it is unfortunate that you are not an elder sister, but you are a relatively normal person and will probably have difficulty figuring out what anyone is trying to say."



·Vice President: "I just started and you're already being so bleak!?"



·Mal-Ga: "Ahh, here it comes. After a while, you're going to make a bad joke and regret it when no one reacts. And to make up for that regret, you'll make another bad joke. I can see it already!"



·Vice President: "Okay, I finally started doing the official version of this. I'm not used to it, but I look forward to chatting with you all."



·Vice President 1648

"Anyway, I'll just be posting some random stuff about my life with this horrible bunch. I'd like to ask you to be kind, but that's probably a lost cause. Yeah."

·Center of attention



·Suppliers of attention



·Links

Asama Shrine "My Wonderful Daughter"
Shirasagi Enterprises
IZUMO HQ
IZUMO Musashi Division
Provisional Committee
Secret Informer Box
Today's Chess Puzzles
I'm Bored! Hm!?
Oxford Trumps
Tres España Vice
President News
The Roi-Soleil is Always
Smiling
It's Hatton -- Death!
Fairly Queen Praise
Committee
Everyday Life of the
Satou Clan
Satomi PR Club

Asama Shrine Divine
Chat - Ver. 1648.11

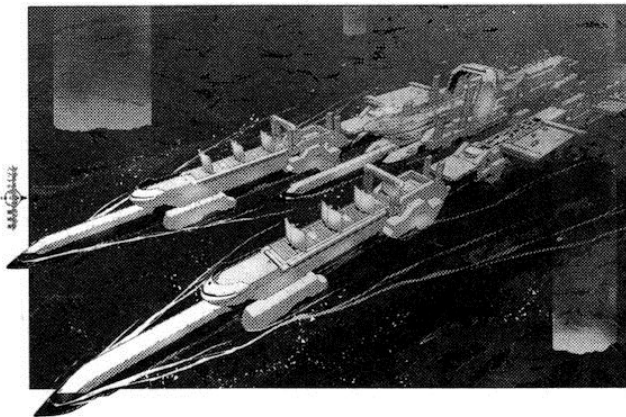
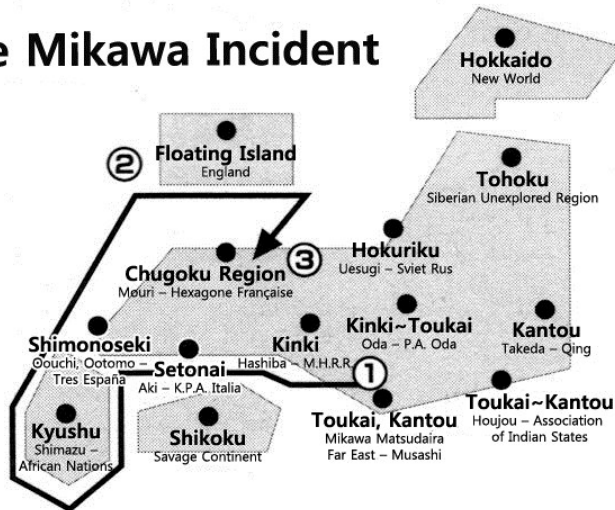
"The Story So Far"

①: Vol.1-A&B: The Mikawa Incident

The stage is earth in the distant future.
The story is mankind repeating history in order to once more ascend to the heavens.

In the Far East which has been put under provisional rule to take responsibility for the collapse of the harmonic world, Mikawa's Matsudaira Motonobu destroyed Mikawa in an explosion, but also gave gathering the Logismo Oplo as a method of ending the Apocalypse. But the Logismo Oplo are based on the emotions of Horizon Ariadust, his daughter, and the pope-chancellor and representative of the Testament Union attempted to gather those Logismo Oplo and stabilize the Far East with her execution.

Aoi Toori, chancellor and student council president of the Far East's Musashi Ariadust Academy, gained the cooperation of flat-chested Vice President Honda Masazumi and some other horrible people, rescued Horizon with a declaration of world domination and sexual carelessness, and retrieved Lype Katathlipse, one of the Logismo Oplo.



Introduction

Introduction

②: Vol.2-A&B: The Armada Battle

To gain an ally, Musashi made its way to England and got involved with the execution of Mary, sister of Queen Elizabeth, and the armada battle that would settle the conflict between England and Tres España. While Masazumi checked on the artificial Apocalypse constructed in England's Avalon, the plain ninja Tenzou stumbled over his confession and made Mary his future wife. And after Musashi somehow achieved victory in the armada battle, they added the Tachibana couple and Mary to their group and retrieved Aspida Phylargia. They then started toward Hexagone Française's floating island of IZUMO for repairs.



③: From Now On: IZUMO

This is where things are now.



極東史

Far Eastern History

A.R.I.A.D.U.S.T.

First of all

Mankind is emotional

And they try to act intellectual

Hopefully, viewing the history that results in will be of some help



Ⅲ 〈A〉


















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Cover Design: Watanabe Kouichi (2725 Inc)

Book Design Concept: TENKY

	Aoi Kimi Toori's older sister and worshipper of the god of eroticism and dancing. Fundamentally high-tensioned and selfish in practice.		Aoi Toori Musashi Ariadust Academy's chancellor and student council president. Mr. Impossible.
	Asama Tomo Daughter of the Asama Shrine, Musashi's main shrine. Childhood friend and overall victim of Toori and Kimi.		Azuma Child of the emperor and a half-god. All his abilities have been sealed and he lives on the Musashi.
	Adele Balfette From a vassal family that arrived from France. Glasses girl.		Itou Kenji Cheerful incubus. Nude, bald, and muscular. Known as Itoken.
	Ohiroshiki Ginji Gourmet otaku with a Heart-sama style build.		Kiyonari Urquiaga 2nd special duty officer. Flying half-dragon. Hopes to be an inquisitor. Known as Uqui.
	Shirojiro Bertoni Treasurer. Young leading member of Musashi's commerce and industry guild.		Tenzou Crossunite 1st special duty officer. Ninja and errand-runner who always covers his face with his hat.
	Toussaint Neshinbara Secretary. Loves history, wants to be an author, and writes doujins.		Naomasa 6th special duty officer. Older sister type who works in the engine division. Smokes and laughs loudly.
	Nate Mitotsudaira 5th special duty officer. Member of a knight family and inheritor of the Mito Matsudaira name. Half werewolf.		Nenji Slime with about 3 HP. Manly.
	Noriki Laborer boy who supports his family. Clumsy martial artist. Silent and unsociable.		Heidi Augesvarer Treasurer's aide. Shirojiro's partner. Has a white fox named Erimaki.
	Hassan Furubushi Calpis logo style Indian. Lives while eating and drinking only curry.		Persona-kun Super macho man with a bucket helmet. Silent, strong, and kindhearted.
	Horizon Ariadust Toori's childhood friend and current ruler of Mikawa. Currently an automaton. Her emotions were taken as parts for the Logismo Opl.		Honda Futayo Former Mikawa student. Honda Tadakatsu's daughter. Uses a strongly old-fashioned speech pattern.
	Honda Masazumi Vice president of the student council. Diligent exchange student who arrived from Mikawa the previous year. Has various issues with her family.		Malga Naruze 4th special duty officer. Black-haired six-winged Weiss Hexen. Member of the manga club.
	Margot Naito 3rd special duty officer. Blonde-haired six-winged Schwarz Hexen. Always smiling.		Miriam Poqou Girl who stays in her room because she requires a wheelchair.
	Mukai Suzu Blind but always gives it her all. Acts as everyone's stopper.		Tachibana Muneshige Former Tres España 1st special duty officer. Amore. Currently working to regain his inherited name.
	Tachibana Gin Former Tres España 3rd special duty officer. Muneshige's wife and possessor of cannon-style false arms. Fifty times.		Mary Stuart Half-sister of English Queen Elizabeth. Well-endowed blonde. Living with Tenzou as his future wife. Owner of Ex. Collbrande.
	Mishina Hiro Granddaughter of the engine department's chief. Loves mechanical things. Naomasa's underclassman. Her name is pronounced Hiro, not Dai.		Mitsu Toori and Kimi's grandmother who lives in IZUMO. An ether engineer.
	Izumo Yuu Executive Chairman of IZUMO. Head of the Izumo clan that manages IZUMO.		

character

Academy Affiliates



Oriotorai Makiko

High-speed battling teacher. Always wears a track suit.



"Musashi"

Automaton that supervises the Musashi and overall commander. Her sharp comments are hard to put up with.

Sanyou Mitsuki

Class 3-Bamboo's homeroom teacher. Looks up to Oriotorai. Somewhat sensitive and unlucky.



Sakai Tadatsugu

Musashi Ariadust Academy's president. Used to be a very able person but was demoted.

Yoshinao

King of Musashi who was sent from Hexagone Française. Has a veto right toward the academy and has the authority to manage Musashi.

Hexagone Française



Louis Exiv

Hexagone Française's chancellor. Refreshing young man known as the Roi-Soleil. Has divine blood.

Anne of Austria

Hexagone Française's previous chancellor and student council president. Exiv's younger sister.



Henri of the Three Musketeers

Female combat-style automaton. Acts as the leader and as Terumoto's bodyguard. Uses large remote-controlled swords.



Isaac of the Three Musketeers

God of war automaton and gunner. Fairly serious.



Mouri Terumoto

Hexagone Française's student council president. Delinquent type. Destined to be Musashi's enemy as leader of the Western Army.

Wife of Luynes

Vice president and Anne's aide. Has Treasurer Mazarin as a double inherited name.



Armand of the Three Musketeers

Male combat-style automaton. Uses broad-range gravitational control.



Viscount of Turenne

Hexagone Française's new vice chancellor. Identity has yet to be revealed.

England

Elizabeth

Chancellor and student council president. Fairy Queen. Ex. Caliburn user.



Ben Jonson

Secretary. Black athlete poet. President of the literature club.

Other

Yoshitsune

Qing-Takeda's chancellor and student council president. Long-lived. Small but feisty.



Satou Brothers

Qing-Takeda's vice president. The two are a pair. Impossible to tell apart.



Satomi Yoshiyori

Satomi Academy's chancellor. Gentle. Uses Murasamemaru and the god of war Yatsufusa.



Satomi Yoshiyasu

Satomi Academy's student council president. Small but does not cry. Uses the god of war Righteousness.



Houjou Ujinao

Chancellor and student council vice president of the Houjou Association of Indian States. A demonic long-lived, but has an automaton body.



Matsunaga Hisahide

Old commander under P.A. Oda's command. Contrarian personality but has real skill. Will later rebel against Nobunaga and self-destruct.

Sarutobi Sasuke

Sanada Academy Ten Braves #1. Uses martial arts and ninja techniques.

Kirigakure Saizou

Sanada Academy Ten Braves #2. Uses a wind movement technique.

Miyoshi Seikai

Sanada Academy Ten Braves #3. Demonic long-lived priest.

Miyoshi Isa

Sanada Academy Ten Braves #4. AKA Isa Nyuudou. Girl who uses a remote-controlled god of war.

Anayama Kosuke

Sanada Academy Ten Braves #5. Looks like a nice guy. Uses ninja techniques.

Unno Rokurou

Sanada Academy Ten Braves #7. Eccentric dancer. Uses a dancing style of swordplay.

Takei Juuzou

Sanada Academy Ten Braves #10. Tall skinny man who uses a remote-controlled shooting technique.

Sassa Narimasa

Along with Maeda Toshiie, holds the #4 position in P.A. Oda's Six Heavenly Demon Army and Five Great Peaks.

•**Ether Reactor:** A reactor that extracts and purifies ether from the air. Has a lower output than a ley line reactor, but is relatively safe.

•**Europa:** Hexagone Française's primary corporation.

•**Excalibur:** Has a first and second version.

•**External Blessings:** Blessings accumulated outside of oneself. Ether fuel is an example.

F

•**Fan Gang:** Qing brand. Durable but a bit rough.

•**Far East:** Name of the Divine States after the Harmonic Unification War.

•**Fino Alba:** K.P.A. Italian brand. Their use of springs is their selling point.

G

•**God of War:** A giant humanoid machine that people combine with to move.

•**Graduation:** No limit for nations other than the Far East. Far Easterners must graduate at 18.

•**Grande y Felicísima Armada:** Tres España's fleet for the Armada battle. Made up of cutting-edge ships.

H

•**Harmonic Territory:** Locations where the fallen Harmonic World Divine States unified with the real world while breaking apart.

•**Harmonic Unification War:** A war between the harmonic world residents and the real world (Divine States) residents after the destruction of the harmonic world. The harmonic world residents won and began a provisional rule over the Divine States.

•**Harmonic World:** A former alternate space that copied the Divine States. Preserved through ley line control.

•**Hexagone Française:** Mouri clan + France.

•**History Recreation:** Recreating the Testament descriptions to maintain the path the world takes.

•**Holy Spells:** Tsihrhc spells. The Catholics are related to the Testament and holy individuals while the Protestants derive power only from the Testament.

•**H.R.R.M.:** Holy Knights Ironworks Guild. Primary corporation of M.H.R.R.'s Catholic principalities.

I

•**Inherited Name:** The name of a historical figure given to an appropriate individual for the history recreation.

•**Internal Blessings:** Blessings stored within oneself.

•**IZUMO:** The Far East's largest corporation. The headquarters for Far Eastern shrines and the corporation that built the Musashi.

A

•**Academy:** An educational facility. Used as the center of political and military power. Tend to have many branch schools.

•**Academy Rules:** The basic laws upheld between academies. Agreed to by the Testament Union.

•**Amako clan:** Former IZUMO land. Destroyed by Mouri and Hexagone Française.

•**Apocalypse:** The end of the world. 1648 when the Testament's history descriptions end.

•**ArchsArt:** England's primary corporation.

•**Armada battle:** A naval battle fought between England and Tres España. Tres España planned to land on England but their fleet was destroyed.

•**Artificial Apocalypse:** A compressed ley line distortion created in England's Avalon to research the Apocalypse.

•**ATELL:** The smallest unit of ether. Used for spells.

•**Avalon:** A space created in England to research the artificial Apocalypse.

B

•**Blessings:** The amount of ether needed for a human to exist for one hour. 3600 ATELL. Conversion unit for a spell's ATELL consumption.

C

•**Catholic:** The old mainstream version of Tsihrhc.

•**Chancellor's Officers:** An organization led by the chancellor which leads the academy and performs work such as defense.

•**Contradiction Allowance:** The foundational ability of the world. Allows the simultaneous existence of all sorts of physical laws.

D

•**Divine States:** Former name of the Far East.

•**Divine Weapon:** A weapon that, unlike a normal weapon, has a unique ability.

•**Dunhi:** A religion. Focused on reincarnation.

E

•**Edel Brocken:** Magic brand. Location of headquarters unknown.

•**Eisenritter:** Primary corporation of M.H.R.R.'s Protestant principalities.

•**Emperor:** A divine individual who is said to control the ley lines using the Imperial Regalia in Kyou. Does not interfere with the world.

•**England:** Uses a floating island and does not control any Far Eastern land or Far Eastern daimyo.

•**Ether:** Component that makes up contradiction allowing space.

•**Ether Engine:** An engine that uses ether's space-altering ability. The effect changes based on the internal crest.

•**Ether Fuel:** Ether that has been purified into fuel. Used as External Blessings or for ether engines.

words

R

•**Religion:** Organizations or groups that worship a god or the Testament.

S

- San Mercado:** Tres Español brand.
- Shinto:** Far Eastern religion. Worships the Far Eastern gods and uses divine music spells.
- Shirasago Enterprises:** IZUMO's shrine brand.
- Sign Frame:** Spell device needed to use each religion's basic protection.
- Song of Passage:** Prototype of a fairy tale created in the Far East during the Edo period.
- Spell:** Causing a miracle in a certain space by processing ether.
- Spirit Spell:** Primitive spells used by talking to and borrowing the power of spirits, which are ether with a will of its own.
- Student Council:** The organization that handles an academy's domestic and foreign affairs.
- Substitution:** Offering something to please a god instead of using Blessings to activate a spell.
- Sviet Rus:** Uesugi clan + Russia.

T

- Tes/Testament:** Means "understood".
- Testament:** A history book that provides the history of the earth's previous age. There are seven pairs and excerpts.
- Testament Descriptions:** History of the earth's previous age that is automatically updated by the Testament. However, it stopped updating after the description for 1648.
- Testament Union:** An organization meant to lead the history recreation.
- Testamenta Arma:** Weapons that use the ability of the Testaments.
- Tres España:** Oouchi and Ootomo clans + Spain. Currently includes Portugal.
- Tsirhc:** A religion which places the Son of God at the top. Worships the Testament.

J

•**Judge/Judgment:** Means "understood". Used by criminals.

K

•**K.P.A. Italia:** Association of Aki States + Union of Italian City States.

L

- Ley line:** The thicker of the pathways through which ether flows.
- Ley Line Reactor:** A reactor that extracts and refines ether from ley lines. Can easily cause ley line mutations and destroy everything within several kilometers if they explode. Due to their instability, they are banned by the Tsirhc religion.
- Logismoi Oplo:** Weapons of mass destruction created on the motif of the seven deadly sins.

M

- Magic:** Folk spells currently under persecution in Europe.
- M.H.R.R.:** Hashiba clan + Holy Roman Empires.
- Mikawa:** Destroyed by the collapse of Lord Motonobu's ley line reactor.
- Mlasi:** A later non-Tsirhc religion that also worships the Testament.
- Mouse:** A spirit beast device to act as an intermediary between the Shinto religion and its musicians. Other religions use different names.
- Musashi:** Aerial city ship. The sole independent territory allowed for the Far East.



- Musashi Ariadust Academy:** The Far East's representative academy which exists on Okutama of Musashi.
- Musician:** A religion's worshiper.

P

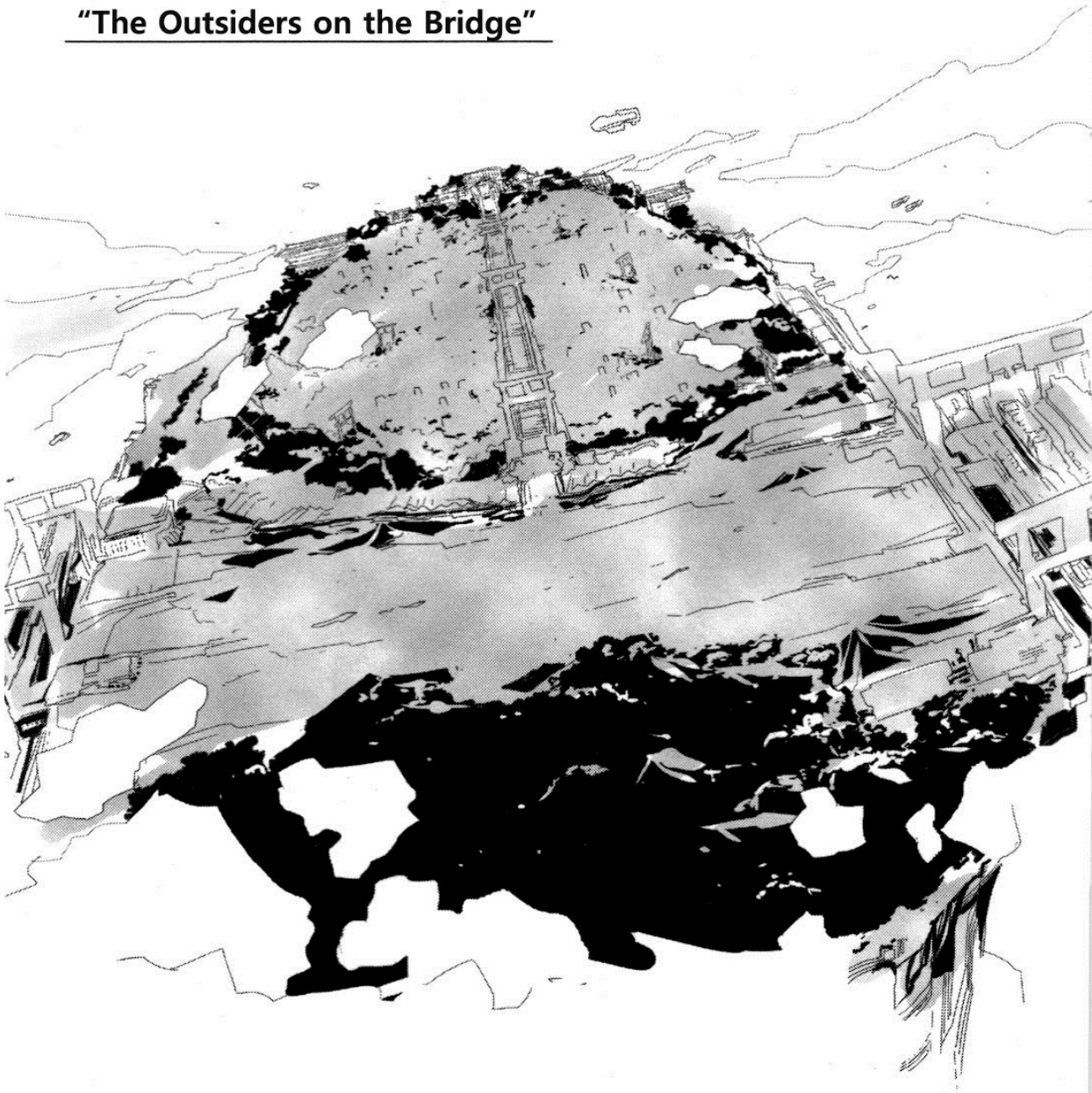
- P.A. Oda:** Oda clan + Ottomans.
- Peace of Westphalia:** The peace treaty that ended the Thirty Years' War.
- Protestant:** A new style of Tsirhc created to escape the corruption of Catholicism and to adjust to the new age.
- Provisional Council:** Group of adults who act as bureaucrats toward Musashi's student council, chancellor's officers, and student committees.

Q

•**Qing-Takeda:** Combination of China and the Takeda clan.

PROLOGUE

"The Outsiders on the Bridge"



Look at that which is close to you
The times you cannot see underfoot are truly...
Point Allocation (Consideration)

Look at that which is close to you

The times you cannot see underfoot are truly...

Point Allocation (Consideration)

ANA: “Hey!”

Dragon Dog^[1]: “What is the matter, milady?”

ANA: “It’s cold. —No, well, it is not that it is cold, I am just feeling cold.”

Dragon Dog: “It may be some kind of failure with the artificial sensory. I will contact those in charge.”

ANA: “You are perfect... However, I have already had that task completed and I was told the same thing, that it might be an error in the artificial sensory.”

ANA: “Hey, is it possible that I may be breaking?”

Dragon Dog: “It is not possible for me to answer that question, the reason for it being that it is a reality that has not happened yet. The only conjecture I can make with respect to a situation which has not occurred is that ‘It is possible that both possibilities exist.’ ”

ANA: “Then, for example if you were to experience this cold, what would happen?”

Dragon Dog: “I would cease to function.”

ANA: “In that case, hey...”

Dragon Dog: “What is the matter, milady?”

ANA: “My older brother said it, right? ‘If something happens, please tell me.’ That he would grant any wish. —Just because he has found a person who is

important to him and started living properly, he is behaving as if he is an adult. In that case, is it fine for me to act like a child?”

Dragon Dog: “I have determined that milady has always remained as a child.”

ANA: “And that is fine, is it not? However, hey...”

Dragon Dog: “Tes. Please say anything you wish to say. What is the matter, milady?”

ANA: “I see that you are the same as always, you are perfect. Then I want you to hear me out. You see...”

In the morning sky there was an island.

Floating at a position lower than the clouds, there was a floating island that stretched from north to south for tens of kilometers. The lower strata area, which hung like an icicle, was divided into massive blocks by rocks and structures; sometimes these would slowly move as a result of the internal frame and change the shape of the island.

At the massive floating island there were two massive objects.

One of these, located on the northern side of the island, was a Shinto shrine which possessed a Shinto shrine-styled gantry crane, several tens of kilometers in scale and a sprawling large scale wooden research facility located at its base.

The other of these was located on the eastern side of the island, also connected with a new Shinto gantry crane with a massive ship in the interior as though it was being protected.

The vessel, which was comprised of eight individual ships, was installed in the large scale dock which stretched from north to south across the eastern side of the island.

It was Musashi.

The eight ship fleet which received the morning sun on the port-side had all of its ships still maintaining their functionality as a city while they remained within the dock. However, from the surface of each ship, there were multiple small, high-pitched noises being raised by countless shadows clinging to the surface.

Those shadows, whether they were gods of war driving in anchor bolts or people who were assisting in the repair of the ship, including other species, were all hurriedly working.

Musashi was currently undergoing complete repairs.

There were the figures of many students among the people participating in the construction.

If you let the students talk, their reasoning would be:

“Well, this makes it possible to earn cash during the early morning.”

“I have been helping out after school, so I started doing mornings as well.”

“Out our way, the outer wall is still broken, which is scary.”

Also, between the people carrying raw materials and the kobolds, multiple running shadows were present.

There was a jersey clad girl with two artificial arms and a tall foreigner in a tank top, a jersey clad retainer who was running with dogs, and following at a considerable distance behind the others there was a silver haired girl.

The girl with the artificial arms and the tall foreigner, who had run further ahead, raised their hand in a greeting and split off into a different route.

In contrast the spectacled retainer, after passing through the path of a natural area at a leisurely pace, ascended the staircase which was located ahead of her.

As she did, the dogs which were following her circled around at the bottom of the staircase and let out a bark.

Once the retainer turned around while waving her hand, the dogs emitted one more bark and then dispersed.

The girl retainer then nimbly ascended the staircase.

Once she had finished climbing there was a building with the nameplate “Musashi Ariadust Academy” and a bridge which reached up to the second floor entrance way. Furthermore...

“Eh? Asama, are you here for morning practice?”

Asama, while continuing to replace the talismans for the hanging lanterns which were built into the bridge, turned around in response to the calling voice.

It was Adele. While regulating her breathing, which wasn't really disordered, she came over that way.

“Are you here for morning practice Asama?”

“Yeah, something like that.”

Asama replied with a bitter smile. She held the talisman in her hand out towards Adele.

“Lately our academy has been keeping the lights on all the night, hasn't it? That's why I am working on replacing the lighting spells. There's also that...”

“What is it?”

“When I consider about what might happen from now on, I thought I should increase my stamina. I started from my family's shrine below, ascended the staircase, and then did a light circuit of the schoolyard with Kimi accompanying me. However...”

Asama looked at the schoolyard. Kimi was collapsed on top of a bamboo bench located in the corner of schoolyard. The red jersey covering her head and upper body belonged to her.

“Well don’t worry about that, I’ll go to recover it later. I’ll return either through my family’s spring or Suzu’s public bathhouse, though whether or not I’ll make it in time for morning class it is a mystery.”

“Kimi always makes sure to eat the breakfast the chancellor makes before coming to the academy after all. About Kimi, how should I put it...why is it that while dancing is not a problem, when it comes to running she is just slightly better than a normal person?”

“Kimi’s Summit Dance is similar to Futayo’s acceleration technique, they both have fatigue reduction protections being inserted into the spell. She insists that ‘I have no willpower so I did it like that!’ ”

While saying that, Asama thought to herself that spells which required access to customization were quite annoying.

After all, Kimi often didn’t think about things beforehand; so when a situation that couldn’t be dealt with by her showed up, she immediately started going on about “New version! New version!” “Okay okay, again? Once again?” “Groin!? Groin is high!?” displaying her insanity. Each and every time, the two of them soaked into the spring together doing this and that...

“My Priestess’s ‘Yearly spell supervision amount’ status rating is high as a result of handling Kimi’s requests.”

After letting out a sigh she was unaware that Kimi had stood up and began walking in their direction. While walking she put on the jacket which had been placed over her and said:

“Eh, what is with this girl’s jersey? The cloth around the chest area has stretched...! This Priestess, what is she attempting to achieve by creating a breast mold!? Planning on making manjuu or something!?”

“It fits you perfectly fine so what exactly are you talking about!? Ah Adele, would you please stop looking down and averting your eyes.”

From beyond Adele, who was looking that way, a hand suddenly grasped the edge of the overhanging bridge from beneath the staircase.

Eh. In front of the girl who was thinking that, from the far side of the grasped palm, an elbow appeared and then proceeded as if to pull up the rest of the body.

“S-somehow I managed one full lap around the ship.”

It was Mitotsudaira.

The jersey clad figure of Mitotsudaira arrived at the top of the bridge completely out of breath.

...I-it really does seem like a “somehow” situation.

In front of her eyes, there was Adele who had run the exact same course yet whose breathing was not disturbed, and a priestess that was big even being same age as her. Mitotsudaira felt a feeling of irrationality against both these parties, however there was nothing to be done.

In any case, Mitotsudaira used the banister as a support and attempted to stand. However her knees were shaking. “Ow...”

She grasped the banister and attempted to move forward but she began to fall to her knees. Hurriedly she attempted to support her body, though before she could take her next action Asama had already approached. While she was already holding a talisman, she said:



“Ah, Mito, please do not push your body so much. I will cleanse your exhaustion with a purification ritual.”

“It is fine, Tomo. I will use my internal bless for a thing like that, you should use it for another...”

Before she had finished speaking, Asama claimed that it was fine and came to her side. She had Mitotsudaira lean against the banister.

“Good Work...”

In order to cast the spell, Hanami displayed several frames for the confirmation. Asama already had the talisman out and was clearing her throat as the preparation for the activation, so there was no way to stop her.

Therefore leaving everything to the agreement, Mitotsudaira lowered her hips, stretched her legs and took a breath. Thus Asama removed Mitotsudaira's shoes, and splitting at the seam lining of the ankle, she opened the tights.

“I'll attach one to the soles of your feet. If it tickles, please let me know.”

“Even if I say it tickles, don't...”

It suddenly happened. Mitotsudaira tried to endure the strength of the fingers which seemed to be pushing into her sole.

“Hyaaa!”

...Impossible. This is impossible!

“Hey... Mito, aren't you too ticklish? Perhaps I should say it is a rare sensitivity syndrome... Hey!”

“W-what is it?”

Asama nodded.

“However, if it is like that then it won’t finish. So, shall we continue?”

“Eh? Hey, go easy on meeee!”

Since she was unable to move her legs, her upper body started to thrash about.

She experienced a different type of being out of breath than before, and, at the point where she became exhausted, she also lost the power to resist. She became limp and was left at the mercy of Asama.

“Mito, you have the same soft soles as Adele... They do say that people with soft soles have fast legs.”

Even if she said it earnestly, there was nothing to do about the reality of the situation.

Letting out a sigh that was unrelated to her exhaustion, Mitotsudaira lightly shrugged her shoulders.

“Even if you say that I am the same as Adele, I am not fast at all you know? I was even called a Heavy Tank type by Kimi.”

Hmm, the one who was puzzled was Adele. She looked at the feet that Asama was rubbing.

“If I had to say, the fifth special duty seems more like the type who does a breaking type of movement. I guess you would say the powerful type.”

Their smiling and attempting to cover for her was a thankful gesture.

That’s why Mitotsudaira took another breath and then opened her mouth. *My, my*, with a self-deprecating attitude, she raised her upper body.

“Is it because I am a Demi Loup-Garou? Or is there some trick that I do not understand? I am just not good with fast movements. Where it is that I should put the strength into?”

“Fifth special duty, if you put too much power in it will actually have the opposite effect and you will be slower, you know?”

“Judge, Naomasa tells me that often. I am taking care to avoid that happening though...”

There Mitotsudaira lightly waved her hand as a demonstration.

The movements were those of a jab, snapped with an open hand and at the end point clenched it.

Since she was relaxed when waving, it was nimble and fast. That is how it should be. It was also accompanied by the sound of the wind. There Asama responded.

“It is fast enough, is it not? Right, Adele?”

“Eh?”

Adele gave a small reaction and immediately following that she hurriedly said.

“Eh, well... Judge, It’s sufficiently fast. Yeah.”

Keeping up other people's appearances to hide the reality was Adele’s thankful but also poor side as a retainer. Mitotsudaira bitterly smiled about it.

“Do not worry about it. I understand that I am slow. After all, in England, though I received martial arts training from Naomasa to deal with Walsingham’s War of the Roses, I ended up just being thrown around.”

Mitotsudaira thought about her speed. Her speed would be considered faster than a normal person, however that would fall short when compared to an expert.

That is the reason why Mitotsudaira believed that was the thing preventing her from becoming stronger.

The Fifth Special Duty being in the fifth position was due to that reason.

She was made to realize that while in England.

When she first arrived in England she witnessed firsthand the speed of Futayo's actions inside the falling cargo ship... So she thought that looking at her role as a power type would be for the best.

While conducting the anti-Walsingham training, she realized that against Naomasa's throws her nerves were able to react but her body could not keep pace. Naomasa told her that she was slow, that is why she did it through experience rather than reacting and practiced until she was able to move by prediction.

However, while massaging her calf muscle Asama abruptly said.

“Ah, the exhaustion removal is almost finished. Mito's regeneration powers are amazing.”

“I did inherit the blood of the Loup-Garou after all. Frankly, my toughness is my greatest weapon. It is thanks to the fact that my body is tough that I am able to strike with such power, and it also allows me to act as a shield.”

However after saying that as an introduction, Mitotsudaira laughed bitterly.

“If you remember what happened 8 years ago at Bizen IZUMO you will understand the circumstances regarding my mother and me. That is how tough I am.”

Hearing those words, Asama and Adele exchanged glances, lowered their eyebrows and showed a smile.

After a little while Adele followed up with this.

“The Loup-Garou family lineages are quite spartan. How about that story related to the Silver Chain which has been subject to rumors for a while now, with the fifth special officer's lineage being a distinguished family in a high position during the Hundred Years' War... was that it?”

“My mother does not talk about these things... It is also true that she has quite a freewheeling personality, however...”

“However?”

Judge, Mitotsudaira nodded. That was something that she had heard via the net on Musashi.

“According to a thread related to the Loup-Garous, after the Hundred Years' War, the Hexagone Française Loup-Garous apparently consisted of two groups, those who choose to live together with the human population, and those which returned to the forest and kept their man-eating tendencies. So the Loup-Garou queen and their nobility returned to the forests, however they were eventually driven out... It also seems the Reine des Garous lost her life some time ago.”

“Lost her... did she take her own life?”

In response to Asama's question, which was asked with a frown, Mitotsudaira nodded. During the period she was in Hexagone Française, not only she was too young so she didn't know, it also was an embarrassment for the country and therefore not revealed to the general public.

The things that I know are only from these past few years.

“While the forest decreased and her companions disappeared, the previous generation Reine des Garous, who succeeded the line after the Hundred Years' War, apparently offered herself to someone who had come to hunt her. Frankly, one can certainly say that the race of the Loup-Garou has declined. My mother also had the characteristic of having those around being wary of her; so they were a race who had trouble being intimate with humans.”

Having said that much, Mitotsudaira fell silent. She reconsidered that she should not say things that would create a wall and shrugged her shoulders.

“My mother's family line, however, was probably fairly well-positioned. I do not know where she lived before she met my father, but according to her stories, the house where she lived was kinda a strange place, like something straight out of a

fairy tale... And then there is also the silver chains. Since she does not speak of the past... She might have been a close associate to the Reine des Garous herself.”

It was something she had thought about more than once. Sometimes she had thought how nice it would have been to be part of the lineage of the Reine des Garous. In the past that was a result of her pride, however now this was about strength.

Having experienced a defeat in England was the depth of shame for a Knight dedicated to protecting the King.

However...

“If there is an opportunity, I would like to hear the whole story directly from my mother, as well as the origin of silver chains and a good fighting method for a Loup-Garou.”

“However, Mito, you were told by your mother not to descend down into Hexagone Française.”

“Y-yeah, I was made to promise that. I did promise that at Bizen IZUMO.”

Go live as a resident of Musashi; it was that sort of thing.

“IZUMO is a neutral zone. However, it is still part of Hexagone Française so the promise with my mother still applies, and the same holds true for Bizen IZUMO.”

That is why I have not descended on Hexagone Française or any of their territories, not since that time.

What happened at that time is not something I wished to recall, however it cannot be helped.

Thinking about it now, as she was a child then if it happened now she thought she would have not been done it so badly.

“However, the only good to come of that was...”

“That the Chancellor was absent,” was what she was going to say but stopped.

The Chancellor did mention how he was going to pay a visit to a relative who was on the verge of death.

That is why she nodded to herself on the inside and shut a range of thoughts inside her heart.

She possessed a variety of things to consider. Not just about herself, but things about her surroundings were also piled up.

That she had not received any communication from the Musashi's Knight alliance was still a thing.

When she finished that thought, a shadow appeared ascending the staircase.

Kimi? Is what she thought and looked.

“Oh? Everyone, so you were here?”

It was Tenzou, and following him was Mary clad in a blue and white jersey.

...*Ah.*

Seeing her with Ex. Collbrande suspended on her left and right, Mitotsudaira forcefully stood up unconsciously.

“Ah! Mito.”

Tenzou immediately understood the reason behind Asama's muffled voice.

She was in the middle of using an exhaustion removal spell.

Mitotsudaira's tights were removed from her feet and the talisman still remained attached to the bottom of the latter. He also faintly understood the reason why she had suddenly stood up.

...It was because Mary was present.

At that moment, Mary who was lined up to the side bowed her head towards everyone.

"Hello, good morning."

"Gud, Moni——gu, Missus Mary."

In a certain way, the mistranslation Adele gave them was terrifying. However, what was reflected in Tenzou's eyes was Mitotsudaira, who in the greeting chose to look down in order to lower her eye contact.

That was an inevitable issue.

Ever since Mary had transferred here, Tenzou realized that Mitotsudaira was unable to decide an appropriate distance between them. There was the long-standing issue between England and Hexagone Française to consider.

There was also the fact they were both nobility.

Following Horizon, Mitotsudaira was second in line for succession for the Far East, while Mary was the future mother of the next king of England.

However Mitotsudaira's family was a lower noble house and their current status was something that had been assigned to them. On the other hand, Mary's royal status was something that she was born with...

"What is the matter, Master Tenzou?"

"Eh? Ah, um, it is just good that everyone is training from so early in the morning."

That is right, Mary's nod indicated she had no ulterior motive with her words. That was a trait she was certainly born with. That had nothing to do with her position as royalty; however that was also something that was not distorted even after persecution.

But...

“.....”

Mitotsudaira, while undergoing Asama's treatment, stood with downcast eyes which could be seen as if she had been scolded.

Then, Asama unexpectedly directed her glance their way while continuing to press her hands against Mitotsudaira's feet.

“Umm, Mary, today after school will you be coming to my family's place?”

“Eh? Ah, it is okay for me to go, right, Master Tenzou?”

As she was taking a part time job at Asama's family shrine, Tenzou nodded his head vertically.

“Um, yes, I am fine with it.”

Mitotsudaira pulled her legs back almost as if she was running away from Asama's hands. Then with the talismans still attached to the bottoms of her feet she roughly put on her shoes, took the sock sections in hand and started to walk away.

She lightly turned back their way, lowering her head with the minimum amount of consideration.

In response to that act as she seemed about to descend the stairs, Asama went to say something but stopped.

Adele spoke.

“Will she be alright? I don’t think that all that exhaustion has completely disappeared yet.”

Yeah, well, there was nothing to do except for Asama to hesitate. However, Mary waited until the figure of Mitotsudaira had completely disappeared from sight down the stairs before taking a step closer to Tenzou's side. She then whispered happily.

“She was concealing a bent toe with a pedicure.”

Was this a request for me to paint my nails as well!? Was this a request!?

I must be overthinking the issue, Tenzou calmed himself down and asked Mary

“Still, Is that something to be embarrassed about?”

In response to the question, Mary loosely bent the scar on her face and said the following:

“The more embarrassing something is, the greater the difference from others. It is also something that one can be proud of, you know?”

I see, he said. In front of his nodding eyes, Adele and Asama were fanning each other with clothes and talismans saying: “Ah, hot hot, it’s steamy in here!” “Yeah you think the same Adele, it’s very hot...!” and the like, however this was something that seemed like it would be impossible to eventually be something to be proud of.

In any case, from the bottom of the staircase, Kimi’s voice was heard.

“Hahahaha, what are you doing slipping and falling onto your butt, Mitotsudaira!? I guess there’s nothing else to be done, I’ll carry you. Come now, ride on these breasts...! Wow! This child got seriously angry!”

Just when he was thinking that she has no mercy, he could hear a sound.

It was the time announcement. Using the bell of the academy, the six in the morning announcement rang out.

The beginning of a day for Musashi.

Study

●IZUMO Outline Diagram●



"Sis! Sis! Exactly what kind of shape has IZUMO!? I thought about it because it is shrine related and they say it is where a deity resides and makes an erotic shape!? Maaraaaaaa—! (sound effect)"



"Heh heh heh. Private brother, stop imitating reproductive sounds. —Anyway, IZUMO is a floating island which levitates at an altitude of 1000 meters and it consists of a land that was originally on the surface but was floated. In ancient times, the section that became the current center was floated for ship development research. Then, with the Harmonic Unification War and the downfall of the Amako clan, they saw the opportunity and took refuge from the surface. That was how it was made."



"This should sum it up. If Musashi was in this diagram it would have the bow towards the bottom and anchored looking to the south. The central area is, actually, a sort of abandoned land, however when doing the individual countries corporate exhibitions, aircraft shows or when an urgent emergency landing is necessary, that location is used."



"Since this is a territory where we can finally relax, let's go to the town beneath the shrine and go shopping! There are a lot of Far Eastern style goods here, so that's a relief."



"Did you just implicitly say you are going to scour for erotic goods?"

IZUMO Outline Diagram

Toori: “Sis! Sis! Exactly what kind of shape has IZUMO!? I thought about it because it is shrine related and they say it is where a deity resides and makes an erotic shape!? Maaraaaaaaa—!(sound effect)”

Kimi: “Hahaha private brother, stop imitating reproductive sounds. —Anyway, IZUMO is a floating island which levitates at an altitude of 1000 meters and it consists of a land that was originally on the surface but was floated. In ancient times, the section that became the current center was floated for ship development research. Then, with the Harmonic Unification War and the downfall of the Amako clan, they saw the opportunity and took refuge from the surface. So that was how it was made.”

Kimi: “This should sum it up. If Musashi was in this diagram it would have the bow towards the bottom and anchored looking to the south. The central area is, actually, a sort of abandoned land; however when doing the individual countries corporative exhibitions, aircraft shows or when an urgent emergency landing is necessary, that location is used.”

Toori: “Since this is the territory where we can finally relax, let’s go to the town beneath the shrine and go shopping! There are a lot of Far Eastern style goods here, so that's a relief.”

Kimi: “Did you just implicitly say you are going to scour for erotic goods?”

Chapter 01: The Companions of the Closed Room

CHAPTER 1

"The Companions of the Closed Room"



What does it mean to be able to speak
Without a guilty conscience?
Point Allocation (Composure)

What does it mean to be able to speak.

Without a guilty conscience."

Point Allocation (Composure)



Dragon Dog: “Milady.”

ANA: “What is it?”

Dragon Dog: “It appears that there is a situation in which I can go there. I think that it will turn into a situation where I will intrude on the co-operators. On the way, however, it seems that several kind souls will intermediate.”

ANA: “Yeah, I mostly understand, it is that old man... Ah, however if you are going over there, I want letters. One from my older brother, one from her and one from my friend. Handwritten, okay?”

Dragon Dog: “With an order of such degree, it should be done one way or another.”

ANA: “My my, you do not care about who the requested party is?”

Dragon Dog: “I am simply saying that I want what I want. I determined that it does not matter who other party is.”

ANA: “You are perfect.”

Dragon Dog: “It is an honour to be praised by you. Well then, milady, is it not about time for you to sleep?”

ANA: “Yeah..., however...”

Dragon Dog: “It is cold?”

ANA: “Perhaps that is right, I wonder?”

Dragon Dog: “In that case, please relax. During the next few days the sun should be visiting. For milady who has received the nickname “moon” in order to receive the sun, the time when the sun has arrived has come. I dare say.”

ANA: “Once the morning comes, the moon disappears you know? It is said.”

Dragon Dog: “No, milady, it is simply that it becomes impossible to see. It yields the light to the sun. There is no way that the moon disappears. It is a physical impossibility.”

ANA: “You are perfect.”



There was a classroom which was warmly accepting the light of the sun.

The window was open, with class being conducted among the incoming wind.

In front of the blackboard there was a female teacher with a nametag that said Sanyou, who while stretching her back was drawing a hexagon with chalk.

“Well now, Musashi is currently in Hexagone Française. I’m sorry that only after two weeks have passed since we have arrived here the scope of class has finally reached this part—”

Since England and after covering English history, things had livened up and she had been unable to catch up. While Sanyou was thinking that at this rate the second semester would be perilous, for the time being she completed drawing the hexagon.

“Okay, this is the shape of Hexagone Française. Originally during the era of the Roman Empire this area was the land of the barbarians. At the present moment, this might be difficult to believe; however at the time with regards to Europe, beyond the northern areas of Rome there was not a country but simply a deserted land in which several tribes came and went. That being the case, the Roman Empire called the part of this large land that would eventually become a part of Hexagone Française the Gaul region.”

Then...

“In order to suppress the threat of the barbarians, the Roman Empire dispatched Caesar. There in 511 B.C. Caesar conquered a large portion of Gaul. Caesar’s memoirs from this era are known today as ‘The Gallic War.’ ”

Sanyou thought to herself that Lord Caesar had accomplished a variety of different things.

With respect to the historical recreation, since Caesar’s invasion of Gaul was the keystone to the following territory segmentation, it was re-enacted through a detailed plan. However as a consequence of being too passionate, a rehearsal ended up being conducted and after the main event, Caesar ended up writing “I came again, I saw again, and I conquered again” in “The Gallic War”.

“Anyway, after the collapse of the Roman Empire, this land once again returned to being the lawless area it was. During the 8th and 9th centuries, this area was once again conquered and the individual who granted peace to this area was Charles the Great, known in French as Charlemagne. He put this region from present day Europe up to Tres España under his command; however after his death his ‘Carolingian Empire’ ended up being divided into three...”

On the right side of the hexagon, Sanyou drew a shape like an upside down shogi piece. Beneath both of these she drew a boot shaped diagram.

“One of these three, the one on the right side, was M.H.R.R. Another one of these, the one at the bottom, became K.P.A. Italia. Lastly, what was the old region of Gaul before became Hexagone Française.”

Well then...

“Do you know what part of Hexagone Française makes it weaker than M.H.R.R. and K.P.A. Italia?”



In response to that question, everyone looked around. When she indicated someone to answer, the blonde-haired student she pointed said.

“Ah, I’m sorry, my family is Catholic...”

Sanyou formed a wry smile. People do have a lot of circumstances after all, so after nodding in recognition she took a breath.

“Well, Hexagone Française does not have either a Holy Roman Empire or a Papacy. In other words, it is simply a country that has large amounts of territory. Therefore compared to the two other countries they possess a smaller amount of influence; and even when they proclaimed their own King he was not recognized either by M.H.R.R. or K.P.A. Italia. Conversely, it was something that was exploited. However...”

Sanyou drew multiple oblique lines on the interior of the hexagon and created a plane.

“Their central regions differ. In the case of M.H.R.R. these consist of a large number of mountains and forests, while in the case of K.P.A. Italia their landmass is scarce; so Hexagone Française with its rivers and large plains had an advantage when it came to production. Using the land as a foundation, by the time of the Crusades the Française has become a country which could be compared favorably to other nations. After that, there were the civil wars caused by the Hundred Years' War and the religious revolution; however on the contrary these events were used to establish ‘Gallicanism,’ a Catholic style which was not controlled by the Pope. Then...”

Sanyou wrote “Emperor” in the center of the hexagon.

“After increasing national power and obtaining an original Catholic style, they also obtained their own Emperor. This was not like the Roman Emperor who was bound by Catholicism and history itself; it was an Emperor for the sake of Hexagone Française.”

“Among those emperors, the individual who led Hexagone Française to its peak was—”

There she took a breath. While looking over everyone, with her back hand she wrote on the blackboard.

“The current Chancellor, Louis Exiv.”

Tapping the blackboard and taking a look, at the end what was written on blackboard was just an illegible mess; so with that Sanyou suddenly halted her movements.



“...Well then.”

While thinking about the mystery of how the neighboring classroom had suddenly become quiet, Mary stood up from her chair.

Inside the silent classroom, she raised her right hand and there appeared a Shinto style sign frame.

It was a set with Tenzou.

The previous day, the confirmation for the contract has passed through Asama and using the setting “Hidden Tsrhc” she achieved a combination of Catholic and Shinto.

“—Mary? Can you give us your opinion? Is it all right?”

“—Eh? Um, Judge, my apologies teacher, I was just thinking about Master Tenzou.”

For some reason everybody straightened their posture and took a position to be able to strain their ears. By the window side, the wet man and his older sister were fanning each other with desk mats, and Musashi's Princess was watching them. On the other side of the classroom, at the aisle seats...

“Master Muneshige... Just now I almost let my soul escape from my body.”

“Eh? What’s the matter, Gin? There’s nothing strange about thinking about your partner.”

While thinking that there were people here who understood what she was saying, Mary operated her sign frame. She thought that if Tenzou, who was next to her on her right hand side while staying silent and looking downward, was feeling unwell she would look after him later. Then she said:

“Well then, Hexagone Française which had gained Louis Exiv as its Emperor increased the size of its territory. It was a result of their shape becoming a hexagon that there was a trend for the Française to be called Hexagon. This was the origin of Hexagone. According to the history recreation, they will be one the victors of the Thirty Years' War; so it is currently thought that they will become an existence which could be said to be the supreme ruler of the entirety of Europe.”

However...

“Louis Exiv decided to cooperate with the Mouri clan who governed the Far East side of the Hexagone Française. He had a student marriage with the current head of the Mouri clan, the woman who inherited the name of Mouri Terumoto.”

Mary thought that here is someone who is in a similar situation to herself.

She had come to the Far East by claiming the survival of England as her just cause, however that kind of thing also happened between the Mouri and Hexagone Française.

While Mary was thinking back on the knowledge of the Far East power balance that she had Tenzou teach her every night, she continued.

“Originally the Mouri family was a powerful regional clan with a small army; however during the generation of the enlightened monarch Mouri Motonari, they expanded the scale of their military force. At that time, the Amako family who was overseeing the Izumo region was brought down. However IZUMO, which was being overseen by the Amako, feared the intervention of Hexagone Française—”

Mary looked out the window so everyone else looked as well.

What was outside the window was the land and city floating in the sky.

It was a floating island, the place where events such as the construction of Musashi had occurred.

On the occasion of the large scale reconstruction that Musashi underwent ten years ago, she had come from England to see it together with her younger sister.

This IZUMO was...

“Prior to the Mouri invasion, the shrine and the central development area were floated. Furthermore, the surrounding ports, companies and workshops were also floated and were considered a neutral territory. There were many connections to the Amako clan in IZUMO...”

She had heard that Milton and Walter, who were of the Amako clan, had continued to battle against the Mouri even after overseeing the flotation of IZUMO. They were doing this as a preventive measure against Mouri and Hexagone Française who were trying to interfere with IZUMO.

It was two years ago when those two came to England. I wonder if it was because they had decided that IZUMO's status as a neutral territory was stable.

On the inside, Mary happily thought that it was after she had departed from England that she had become able to think that way about them.

“There are quite a number of individuals currently in Musashi who were originally from IZUMO.”

The one who nodded in agreement was Oriotorai.

“That holds true for me, as well as Suzu's father. Toori and Kimi's mother's family side were also from IZUMO. Also... Sanyou was as well.”

The one who nodded in agreement was Kimi.

“Haha, at IZUMO our grandmother was doing ether related... Now she would be an advisor I wonder? Anyway, it's that type of thing right? If I can make the arrangements, I was considering visiting her today. However, foolish brother?”

In front of the dancing girl's question, the wet man tilted his neck.

“Hmm... You're planning to bring Horizon along with you right? Nah, I'm a little reluctant, so I'll go afterward.”

“Is that so, Toori-sama? Why?”

In response to the Musashi's princess's question he scratched his hair with an *um* sound.

“Well, for some reason or another, I guess.”

Mary, who was thinking that there must be some circumstances behind that, looked towards the puzzled Horizon. After that, she continued.

“So about this Mouri family, right now they have a slightly difficult situation approaching them. That is because in the era of the Mouri current family head, Lady Terumoto, during the final battle deciding the rulership of the Far East they

become a representative of the Hashiba's side, the Western Army, and battle with the Eastern Army of Matsudaira—”

She took a breath.

“—As a result they meet their defeat and lose a large amount of their military force.”



Nonetheless, in order to get across her words, Mary opened her mouth.

“However the Mouri clan prospered with Lord Motonari's three sons, and they prepared for what was to come. Regarding the three, there is the story of the three arrows, a famous anecdote of Lord Motonari that was devised to show them they had to unite their abilities, right?”

This was knowledge that she had heard from Tenzou just the previous day.

Lord Motonari called his three sons together and began by handing a single arrow to his eldest son, who was asked to snap it.

After that he handed his next son two arrows, which he somehow managed to snap himself. However, when he handed his third son three arrows and he tried to break them on his own he was unable to do so.

The eldest and second sons were also unable to break the three arrows. The three men who were unable to break them suffered a trauma. Consequently Lord Motonari said.

“.....You must not ostracise yourselves. You are to combine the skills of the three or will you suffer emotional damage otherwise...!”

Saying that, the three of them peacefully combined their abilities and overcame the difficult situation. It seemed to be that sort of teaching.

This was apparently something that nearly became inconsistent with how the history recreation was done; however that was apparently averted thanks to Lord Motonari's praised ad-lib abilities.

Mary thought that the people of the Far East have high skills for performance.

“—Then Lord Motonari sent his second and third born sons into the East and West territories that Mouri was suppressing in order to solidify the defenses given the indirect rule that Mouri was conducting. However the first son who was to succeed the Mouri clan soon passed away. Consequently the child of the oldest son, the grandchild of Lord Motonari Terumoto, ended up becoming the young heir to the Mouri clan.”

However Lord Motonari, who was supporting this young ruler, also passed away some time later.

So this child, being supported by her two uncles who had gone to different families and the other uncles who were the children of Lord Motonari's concubines, took command of the Mouri clan.

“However afterwards they suffered the Hashiba invasion and surrendered, choosing to become incorporated into the organization as this was the path to keep Lord Terumoto alive. I wonder if it is because of this that it is said that Hexagone Française and the Mouri clan formed a close relationship in order to prevent the invasion from the Far Eastern side and their interference in Hexagone Française's rule.”

Well then, Mary spoke. What was being displayed in her sign frame was Hexagone Française's structure.

- **Chancellor: Louis Exiv – Inherited the blood of the gods. Testamenta Arma user.**
- **President: Mouri Terumoto – Wife of Exiv. Also inherited the name of D'Artagnan. Testamenta Arma user.**

- **Vice Chancellor: Lord Turenne** – Due to the name inheritance being announced only recently, the details are unknown.
- **Vice President: Luynes** – Refers to the God of War Palais-Cardinal. Also inherited the name of the treasurer Mazarin.
- **Secretary: Mouri Motokiyo** – Hexagone Française’s automated doll Mouri-01. Terumoto’s adviser.
- **Special Duties: The Three Musketeers (Henri, Armand, Isaac)** – Combat model automatons under Terumoto.

“—That should sum it up. Since France had formed a relationship with the Mouri, it was then that they first began to exchange automatons as personnel. It is said that they are a part of Mouri’s side force replenishment; however, beyond that nothing was said about Turenne’s identity except that he is a first year from a different species, so this is a source of uncertainty.”

In front of Mary’s eyes, while he was pulling out a sign frame with the same contents as hers, the one who nodded in agreement was the glasses wearing boy who was close with Shakespeare.

“It would seem that it was personally recommended by Louise Exiv’s younger sister, the former Provisional Chancellor and Student Council President Anne D'Autriche; who as the result of an incurable disease is currently undergoing treatment at a M.H.R.R. Protestant city. However, according to hearsay this person apparently passed the test implemented in Hexagone Française by quite a narrow margin. It is said it might be the possessor of some type of specialized ability or something.”

“Well, from what I hear, in other words it is an idiot?”

“No; after all there is no way that it is something so simple as we are talking about the Vice Chancellor class. We have to be cautious.”

The one who spoke in agreement was Oriotorai who was standing at the podium. While writing a summary of the words with chalk on the blackboard, she sent a smile of recognition their way.

“Well, that should sum it up. Thank you for your opinion Mary, you did a good job.”

Being told that by the person who was in charge, she felt relieved as she was becoming a member of the class.

“Thank you very much!”

“Judge. Well Mary, our class has this kind of atmosphere, okay? Um, the contents of your punishment are—”

She said ‘Judge,’ however Mary tilted her head. While everyone was questioning what exactly was occurring on her inside, she said.

“I think it was determined by majority so it turned like that... However, how does me kissing Master Tenzou constitute a punishment?”

Tenzou, who was next to her, hung his head, tilted it and fell onto his desk; and then Oriotorai, while still keeping her back facing that way, raised a strange noise with chalk on the blackboard.



Masazumi was reflexively taken aback at the ear-splitting noise which penetrated her ears to the core.

I'm really bad when it comes to this type of noise. Glancing around her surroundings, directly in front on her Mitotsudaira's hair was completely standing on end and shivering.

“My my my! Nenji! You’re rippling!”

“Yeah! Shake my surface!!”

How noisy.

Nevertheless, in response to Mary, Oriotorai dragged the strange noise until she reached the edge of the chalkboard.

During that time, Masazumi was lightly clenching her teeth and shaking.

“Ah!”

The strange noises vanished, and at the same time that Oriotorai turned around the end of class bell began to slowly ring out.

Oh, well, Oriotorai checked the time, placed the chalk and paused for a moment.

“For now today’s class is finished. Then during HR we will discuss the preparations for the upcoming planned field trip. Well, currently Musashi has not yet decided where it is headed yet; when the situation is clear it is something that I want to be decided. Also the person who is going to Miriam’s place, please take the notes.”

Hearing the words being she said, Masazumi suddenly thought.

Determining the situation of Musashi is my job, right? Well, what should Musashi do for the current future? That plan had been mostly decided.

There Mitotsudaira, who was in front of her turned around and spoke.

“Masazumi? In approximately one week, Musashi’s repairs should be completed. If there is something that you haven’t decided upon, I am available for consultation you know? My hometown is in the skies of Hexagone Française after all.”

“Ah, in that case, I’ll have you accompany me after school for a bit. There is something that I wish to examine a little. I also wished to discuss with everyone where we should direct Musashi from here on out.”

With those words, everyone in the classroom turned around. Oriotorai also raised a smile and loudly clapped her hands.

“Okay, okay but for now, wait until after we have finished HR okay? Then you can do as you please.”

Judge, Masazumi exchanged nods with Mitotsudaira, then as if to convince herself Masazumi muttered:

“I have to keep being level-headed. Both for the future of Musashi and the Far East... First thing to do is HR. Once that is finished, it would be after school. That will be the start of my free time.”

Chapter Two: The Pioneers of the Location

CHAPTER 2

"The Pioneers of the Location"



Being there
Even without being told
What is a good place?

Point Allocation (Right Person in the Right Place)

Being there

Even without being told

What is a good place

Point Allocation (The Right Person in the Right Place)

●

Dragon Dog: “Milady, I have obtained permission. Before I depart tomorrow it seems I will be able to take possession of the letters. However your friend did require some arrangements being made. Also—”

ANA: “Also, what?”

Dragon Dog: “There was also a letter from milady’s friend’s spouse. They were talking about doing something with the collected fruit, however I only took possession of the flowers.”

ANA: “Jeez... Everyone is being tactful in strange areas.”

Dragon Dog: “No, it was me who made that request. I wanted them to be tactful.”

ANA: “.....You are perfect.”

●

After-school activities began.

The students left the school grounds and headed off into their respective locations, so many went to assist in the repairs of Musashi or headed towards the location of their part time jobs.

This was the time when voices were exchanged, separated and once again assembled at the location where they wanted.

However, a gaze that overlooked all of this was located inside a closed room.

From the bridge, which almost spanned all over Musashi's central forward vessel Musashino, there was someone who was observing everything.

The person who came hastily up there after they finished class was...

“Suzu-sama... Have this. It is green tea and apple pie purchased in the fair below. Over.”

“T-Thank y-you, ‘Musashino-san.’ ”

It was Suzu.



While being at the center of the bridge, even after the teacup and plate were placed on the side-table next to her chair she did not immediately reach for them.

For she who had just come here, the first thing she laid her hands on was the space surrounding her chair.

...The imitation of Musashi and IZUMO are almost done.

In the space in front of her outstretched hands was the area of Musashi along with the geography and city surroundings, all of it made of light.

As Suzu sat in a chair, the model of the world moved with the movements of her hands; and additions or removals to the three-dimensional model were carried out correctly.

Looking at that spectacle “Musashino” said.

“It appears that the Musashi model has been almost completed. Over.”

“U-umm but s-since it changes e-every day... I am u-unable to k-keep up.”

Particularly in this area, Suzu formed a smile and pointed to an area near the deck of the first port and starboard ship with huge repairing spots.

“W-when something occurs again, w-will this be useful?”

Judge, the automaton nodded her head.

“I can conclude that carrying out orders will be improved if we have a detailed understanding of the deck. Also, if we have a map created with a different approach than our reasonable judgment as automatons, it can be very useful for our support in daily activities. It will also be helpful to the elementary school children and the other people who come here for sightseeing. In addition to that, compared to the geographical understanding automatons have, when Toori-sama causes a problem the map Suzu has created makes his “hiding places” easier to determine. —Over.”

Is that right? Suzu thought as she nodded with a smile, took a breath and adjusted her seating.

After hesitating for a moment, Suzu took the teacup from the side table in both her hands and sat back in her chair.

However Suzu, who went as if to sink into the model of Musashi, then abruptly let out a small laugh.

“What's the matter? —Over.”

“Judge, e-everyone’s after school a-activities are quite varied... Look at t-them.”

Suzu put the teacup up to her mouth and then, as if to count the models individual locations, she indicated them with her right fingers.

Her fingers, which indicated the places in order from above, finally pointed to one place.

It was a building at the rear of Okutama. The imitation of the Musashi Ariadust Academy.



Even if it was after school, there were still shadows of people inside Musashi Ariadust Academy.

Those remaining were not only the students who were part of the indoor clubs.

“So I came for this examination, but in this school the student council room is absolutely not clean and handled quite irresponsibly. Mitotsudaira... you are a member of the Chancellor's Office so you don't use this room, right?”

Masazumi surveyed the place where she was currently standing... She was in the school building third floor frontal side, the Student Council room.

One might even call this the face of the academy; however...

By all rights this room should have had a quite a large floor space. However there were chairs, tables and other goods piled up left and right, creating a corridor from the door to the windows.

This was evidence that successive generations of Student Councils had not been functioning properly.

In front of Masazumi, who was surveying this valley of goods, was Mitotsudaira who opened a window and then turned around with a fed up expression.

“This is more like a storeroom than a Student Council room. Well, it is the same for the Chancellor's Officers as well.”

“Is that so?”

"Jud" said Mitotsudaira, trying to avoid touching anything and shrugging her shoulders.

“The members who make up the Chancellor's Office use the room down below... but it is in the same state as this one. After all, the Far East operated under the premise that there would be no emergency situations under the oppression of the Testament Union. Even after Mikawa, if something happens it is usually settled in the classroom, the cafeteria, or on the top of the bridge. However, why now of all times did you want to use this place, Masazumi?”

I wonder why, Masazumi thought as she looked at the work of art composed by the careless piling up of goods and desks to the point that the ceiling on the left and right was obscured, and she let out a sigh. She folded her arms and once again thinking about what was going on, she talked.

“When I was appointed as the vice president, I came here to look once. That time, I decided that the Far East Student Council was after all a mere skeleton and decided to give up.”

However...

“—The classroom, the cafeteria, on top of the bridge, the courtyard or Blue Thunder... we can hold a strategy meeting anywhere. I came to realize recently that the Far East was that kind of place. However, I also thought that it is necessary for everyone to have a place to share.”

“Then, the place that everyone can share is—”

Yeah, Masazumi shook her head downwards motioning towards the floor with her right hand.

"It's not that I'm suggesting we have to be here all the time. However when we can't make contact, when we wish to save someone, when there is a time to be patient... you should come here; what I want is a place like that."

While saying that, she remembered something that occurred at Mikawa. The shocking feeling of returning home on a certain day and realizing that her mother was gone still remained inside her heart.

To suppress her past fear, she wanted a place where people could believe that someone was to be there.

I wonder why.

Masazumi looked at the outside through the seemingly narrow window. The city of Musashi was spread out under the afternoon sky and beyond the edge of the dock, the fields, and shelter belts was the city of IZUMO. Masazumi gazed with sharp eyes further into the inside of the city, the south-eastern sky and the forest and valleys of the mainland which spread out beneath IZUMO.

"—Only one week until the repairs are complete. After that, we will begin moving again in order to gain the cooperation of many countries. However this part of Europe is currently in the middle of the Thirty Years' War. I cannot deny the possibility of sustaining damage like we did during the Armada Battle. If we hold an official position when that happens, the civilians' sense of security will probably change a lot."

"Judge, I also believe that what will occur from now on will be a true battlefield. There is also Neshinbara's opinion that in the previous Armada Battle, in order to preserve their own fleet the strategy of Tres España was to aim through the use of a small efficient force not the sinking of Musashi but to stop it; so it was not all-out war for them."

Listening to Mitotsudaira's words, Masazumi thought that she was correct.

That's why she nodded and said:

“I want to strengthen the Student Council and Chancellor’s Office. Think of it as secret urgent business.”

After saying that, Masazumi thought that in Mitotsudaira’s expression there was a shadow. That’s why she asked:

“Is there something troubling you?”

“Eh? Ah, no.”

In front of Masazumi’s eyes, Mitotsudaira lightly waved her hand from left to right. Then as if she was arranging her thoughts...

“I have to make sure to be reliable, so I have to take into account my true abilities.”

“I think that you are doing a good job.”

During the crash of the cargo ship it was she who had supervised things like the night watch, the transport of supplies, and the construction inside the ship. If she had not been present then many of Tenzou's orders would have not worked, and this was something that everyone who was there at the time realized. However...

...I wonder if it was because Mitotsudaira is a member of the Chancellor’s Office.

There is also one’s duty as a Knight, thinking about her role during battle...

...In England she suffered a draw with Walsingham.

And on board Musashi, even with the help of Walsingham she was unable to stop Tres España's Vice Chancellor Hironaka Takakane. That was what is called difference in strength. However...

“Even though there is always someone stronger I still wish to become stronger, you know?”

“Then, in that path of strengthening it would be good to search for a suitable location. If there is anything let me know. After the Armada Battle there has begun to exist some understanding in the general public about the necessity of battles. That will make it easier to gain acceptance.”

Judge, Mitotsudaira nodded and a slight silence occurred.

Thinking that it would be bad for the silence to continue, Masazumi purposefully let out a large breath.

“Well then.”

Saying that in a distinct voice to bring Mitotsudaira to her senses, she rolled up her jacket sleeves.

“Well then, shall we do a little examining...?”

“L-Let us do that. However this is...”

In front of Mitotsudaira’s half opened eyes. What was there was...

“.....Ah? Right from the start, what is this mountain of mail order. ...Huh, eroge have been placed and piled up in here!”



Masazumi took in her hand a brown wrapped package which was lightly covered in dust. Narrowing her eyes and holding it aloft, she noticed that it was indeed exactly what she had thought.

"Good grief." After using that as a preface, Masazumi said:

“That idiot, what does he think this place is...!!”

“...It is amazing that you have no doubts about who that belongs to, Masazumi.”

If there is some other possibility, I would like to know.

However, Mitotsudaira also took one in her hand with a testing air.

“What is this exactly? “Theban Genuine Force vs. Spartan Homo Army Corps - The Remaining 300”; it is written on the receipt resolutely, you know? ...Also, it is not only the title; the subheading “There are no women! Regain your sanity!” is excessive. Is his head alright?”

“Like I would know. In any case we have to dispose of any sad games because if that idiot dies, the existence of this country will be in jeopardy. I have to clearly tell him that he should only buy the next one only after he had finished clearing the current ones.”

“I feel that the Chancellor spends all the money from his part-time job on this....”

...And on the other hand, I already finished mine with just food and book expenses! A family which provides food is enviable!

While thinking about her real motivations and as a response to the situation in front of her eyes she summoned her anteater Tsukinowa. After getting her positioned on her shoulders, patting her head, and rubbing her cheeks, together they opened the chat.

Vice President: “Asama, I will send you an image of the eroges that are here; if we sold them, how much would that be?”

Asama: “Umm, from the looks of it everything would be worth about 12000 yen... huh, why was I called as the appraiser!?”

She has already told me what I wanted to know. Having personnel who did not hold official positions yet were still talented was a good thing to have for the country.

“Anyhow, so selling all this and only getting about 12000 yen. ...I really don't understand males.”

“—Even though in the past you were trying to become one?”

Having that said to her with a bitter smile, Masazumi considered her own circumstances. However she was unable to come up with a good explanation.

“I’ll correct myself, I don’t understand that idiot.”

In contrast to Mitotsudaira’s deepening bitter smile, Masazumi, directed her gaze at the window while feeling uncomfortable. Beneath her eyes was the overhead bridge in front of the school yard where she had done the public debate. Thinking that it was around there that she had debated...

.....She also remembered it was there where she had also had her trousers yanked down...!

“Ah, umm, Masazumi, you seem to be upset about something? Was it what I just said?”

“Eh? Ah no, it has nothing to do with that. It was something else from a while back.”

Masazumi shifted her glance to the front. As she did, on the other side of the descending staircase beneath the bridge was Remorse Way.

...The natural area at the port side is where that park is.

After she had seen Sakai off to Mikawa and returned, that was the park path she used when going through the natural area.

In the center there was a retreat building, a small place where there are always children playing. After that time, she had stopped by several times and spent her reading time there. It was one of the few spots inside Musashi where Masazumi could relax.

Sooner or later, while thinking that it might be nice to have a meal or a conference at the hermitage, Masazumi rolled up her the sleeves of her jacket.

“Well, I’m not planning to do a full-scale job, but shall we see what it's like deeper inside...”

Once that is complete...

“Shall we descend to IZUMO for a break, Mitotsudaira?”



Mitotsudaira listened to Masazumi’s question.

“There is apparently a festival happening down at IZUMO.”

With those words, Mitotsudaira experienced a moment of indecision.

...She was being considerate of my circumstances.

As a matter of fact, Hexagone Française was the homeland of Mitotsudaira. However even after receiving permission to enter IZUMO, she had not descended into IZUMO. Naturally, there was a reason she had not done so.

The promise she had made with her mother.

That’s why even though many people including her friends were descending to take a break, she herself did not go.

It seemed like Masazumi had realized that fact. Consequently...

...That she didn’t ask why I do not go but instead invited me to go with her was—

That was her way of being considerate with the short friendship they had.

Everyone in her surroundings already knew the reason, so they no longer made this type of invitation. However, this provided a sense of freshness.

That’s why Mitotsudaira with a bitter smile mixed in...

“It is alright, I have yet to do the management of my territory inside Musashi. Shortly Musashi will head to Edo, right? I think that I will descend at my actual territory.”

“I see.”

At that point Masazumi put an end to that topic. As both parties took a short pause, the conversation did not restart.

.....*Ah?*

With a slight doubt, Mitotsudaira thought about the present situation. It was almost as if whether to continue implied to mention a bad topic.

.....*Uh.*

From Masazumi's current silence she could feel an atmosphere of apology. Masazumi had also already realized it as well, however if she immediately brought out a new topic it was certain that it could be felt that she was avoiding the previous one.

It was now Masazumi's turn to wait, and for her to bring out a new topic to as a way of saying to do not worry about it.

Mitotsudaira thought that she had to say something.

...*H-however, umm.*

Frankly, she was not good with this kind of situation. Wiping away an uncomfortable sweat, Mitotsudaira continued.

“U-umm, that is...”

Right when she finished panicking, a voice unexpectedly came from behind her. It was...

“Oi oi oi oi you girls! What are you doing with my treasure library!?”

Turning around, there in the corridor was an idiot carrying an eroge package.



Masazumi, who was in a state of completely half-closed eyes, turned around to look at the culprit responsible for the state of this room. On her shoulder...

“Ma-”

There, there Tsukinowa. You were not mistaken in deploying attack spells. However, those were the anti-ghost spells that Asama gave us during the battle against Hatton. You need anti-object or anti-personal spells. Also, it is fine if you do not do that against other people, okay?

However, while their side was conducting something like a strategy meeting through eye-contact, that idiot said.

“Ah! These girls. Even though I went to great trouble to arrange the titles in several orders, you went and ruined that! Seijun! Do you understand how much the “The Changelings – Throbbing Labyrinth Version” that you are currently holding is worth!?”

“It comes to about 300 yen out of the 12000 yen, doesn’t it?”

Saying that, the idiot pulled a textbook from his breast pocket, said *dammit!!*, and threw it against the floor. Following that, the naked guy who was still wearing clothes pointed in their direction.

“You don’t understand! Don’t understand at all, Seijun! The values of goods are not determined by their price alone!”

“Ah! So it is whether they are useless or not.”

The idiot again threw the textbook against the ground. Following that he looked at Mitotsudaira.

“Oi oi Nate! Say something to her. By the way Nate, won’t you come down to IZUMO and hang out with everyone? The fresh meat there from Hexagone Française is delicious. At the moment it’s lamb! Lamb! How about having a bite of one only salted and spit roasted?”

“Uh..... Um, that is, well.”

In contrast with Mitotsudaira who was unable to follow the flow of the conversation, the idiot said while scratching his head.

“It’s fine Nate.”

Hmm, there the idiot tilted his neck.

“It’s not like your mother told you not to come back ever again. And it’s not the mainland but IZUMO, once in a while let’s all go down and grab a meal together, yeah? Everyone wants to have a meal with you, you know!? An expensive one!”

“...Is that because you want it to be my treat?”

That is what I was thinking, Masazumi muttered to herself. However, she was also pondering about...

.....*Mother?*

That was the first time she had heard that story.



Masazumi did not know very much about Mitotsudaira.

All she had heard was that she was originally from the lesser nobility, and that her family was consisted for her mother, a Loup-Garou and her father, a human.

There was also that, for some reason or another, she had inherited the name of the Mito-Matsudaira clan and was dispatched alone to Musashi which had led to her current situation.

...Mitotsudaira's last name was also originally a different name.

Masazumi did not know the specific details with regards to the circumstances regarding her name inheritance.

This was because recently in Hexagone Française, not only the important roles but also the noble lineage had been frequently interchanging due to the historical recreation of the Thirty Years' War and the Catholic and Protestant civil war.

Both their Treasurer and Vice Chancellor had just been changed. Everything was all part of the flow to welcome the era of the monarchy of Louis XIV.

Louis XIV was the King who, after going through the civil war and the chaos of the Thirty Years' War, would implement an absolute monarchy.

In the Testament it was recorded that Hexagone Française would experience unprecedented prosperity at the behest of that King.

Consequently, the other countries attempted to delay the name inheritance of Louis XIV with Hexagone Française having to accept many disadvantaging conditions to escape from these oppressions.

The year before last, the name of Louis XIV was inherited by someone at the first year of high school, however...

...Mitotsudaira being dispatched to Musashi from such a young age was also part of a deal in order to speed up that flow.

From the fact that Mitotsudaira was placing importance on her livelihood as a dispatched Knight from Hexagone Française even while aboard Musashi, it was likely she had not totally cut herself off from Hexagone Française. That she would not even descend to IZUMO was...

Her mother, huh.

She did not know the finer details but when it came to family bonds, that was different. If you became involved with that known as “family”, even prying at it there is always a part which could not be dealt with through emotion.

“Mitotsudaira, You want to eat something afterwards?”

“Eh?It is not like I don’t want to go to IZUMO...”

“Nah, Tama is fine as well. Since Tama is also a foreign exchange ship, we can eat meat from Hexagone Française and have good views. The guys who descended below will probably bring us something as well. —Mitotsudaira, it’s fine if you bring green soybeans and ah, natto, right?”

“No, that is, it is not that my main business is natto... Chancellor! Where are you planning to sneak away to while carrying the goods that we are trying to clean up!?”

“Ah, don’t you get it? To a different safe house, safe house.”

“Where is that?”

“Ah! Beneath the veranda at Asama’s Shrine and inside the attic of Shiro’s shop; I spent a lot of effort remodeling them.”

Vice President: “Did you hear? Can you go and have a quick look?”

Asama: “They are really there. When did he!”

Me: “Ah! Idiot, that is where the ones with priestesses are; wait till I arrive!”

Asama: “I understand. Well, once you have arrived I’ll burn them in front of your eyes okay?”

Me: “You idiot. Think about the feelings of the people who created them. Do you get it!?”

Novice: “If you burn them, they won’t become a part of the second hand market; I, as an author, see that as a viable choice.”

Me: “D-Dammit, the net is full of enemies! It’s fine since I’m living in reality. In this reality space my power is threefold! However your powers have fallen to one-third! Get it!?”

Worshipper: “That’s from ‘Space Magistrate Echizen’ which started the other day. The one who equips their combat gear in 180000 milliseconds.”

Silver Wolf: “How about a thirty minute program that ends with just the transformation? In a certain way it is realistic.”

Asama: “How should I put it, with those calculations if the original level of power was a tenth of the enemy's, even with corrections you would still lose by a narrow margin.”

“Da-dammit! You guys reality assessment is zero sugar! Did you see that just now!?”

However, the idiot, perhaps realizing something slowly turned around. There...

“Huh? Horizon, what are you doing pretending to smoke a cigarette and blowing smoke out of your nose? Are you going to help me?”

The following moment the students of the exercise based club who were practicing in the courtyard saw the window of the Student Council room smash and a human shaped something flying through the sky. However, after confirming that it fell on top of the bridge everyone returned their gazes and continued their respective defense and attack training.

Jeez..., said Mitotsudaira, who saw Horizon stretching out the fingers of her right hand, then looked at the broken window and began experiencing an uncomfortable sweat.

“H-hey, Horizon?”

“Judge, today I have plans to go with Kimi-sama to IZUMO. However on the way I thought about bringing Toori-sama along, and have been chasing after him.”

“Yeah, now that you mention it, you did mention something about that during class.....”

“Judge. It is the store master’s family. The store master’s parent, Toori-sama’s grandmother, is there.”

The reason for going there was...

“It appears that grandmother knows about the past of Horizon, therefore I wanted to meet her at least once.”

Hearing the contents of the spoken words, Mitotsudaira lightly held her breath.

There were a lot of things to consider.

There was the fact that Horizon had begun to hold interest regarding her past self, and that she was going to face her past head-on. There...

...Kimi had probably proposed the idea; however the Chancellor was not eager to go.

Horizon wished to know about her past self.

I wonder if the fact that he was trying as much as possible to not interfere was because there's still a part which he was drawing back from Horizon.

That’s why...

“...Catch the Chancellor—”

She tried suggesting that for a reaction.

“Shall I accompany you? As an escort.”

Hey, Masazumi called out to her from behind. However, Horizon said:

“No.”

She was rejected.

Nevertheless, before the shock of being told she was unnecessary came, Horizon continued speaking.

“Yes, —I have already requested Futayo-sama to accompany me.”

“I-Is that so?”

As if trying to fill the void which had opened up inside her, Mitotsudaira asked a question.

In front of Mitotsudaira’s eyes Horizon, nodded in response. It was correct.

“Judge, lately Futayo-sama has been extremely busy, and due to her effectiveness at her job slicing the remains of armor plating she has been called “Lady Ueno”; I thought she should take a break. Just now when I could not find Mitotsudaira-sama, I called out to Futayo-sama and there she was saying that she had interest in French confectionery.”

“...It seems that over there Futayo has been unable to acquire any free time, and her tension seems like it is falling.”

However, well...

“To reduce Futayo's tension, if she says it as we are talking about sweets I could prepare them, you know?”

“Is it possible for Mitotsudaira-sama to produce confectionery?”

Mitotsudaira nodded her head slightly.

She was confident that she could cook.

Her cooking had a tendency towards that of a wolf, though she could make sweets (as long as citrus fruits were not used). Particularly those Western confections which used dairy products such as butter and cream were among her favorites. That was, in other words...

“Confectionery that uses the fat of animals. —That suits the tastes of a wolf, you know?”

“Judge. Well, eventually I would like you to teach me how to make those. If I can say it, a lot of what Blue Thunder does are meals; so the master had also said that she has wished for that kind of repertoire.”

Really? The one who raised their voice was Masazumi.

“Well, while I’m a supporter of Eastern sweets, I do still have interest in Western confectionery. My father likes them, and it would be good if I could serve them before and after meetings. —Would you be willing to teach me, Mitotsudaira?”

Judge, Mitotsudaira went to reply, however she thought about it for a moment.

If I had to say, recently the main trend of French confectionery were small goods. Taking into account the fact that Horizon was working in a bakery...

“If it is something you plan to sell in the store, I believe that there is a more suitable person than me.”

“Who would that be?”

“Judge, Mary Stuart.”

Mary who was provisionally seeking asylum from England was, together with the Tachibana couple, presently a member of their class.

However, Mitotsudaira had hardly exchanged words with Mary. The reason was simple.

...It was because she was British.

During the Middle Ages Hexagone Française had invaded England. However, those invaders became indigenous and created the southern part of England. Consequently, England repeatedly attempted to be involved with the Royal succession of France; and there was also what happened to the famous Joan of Arc who brought the end to the Anglo-French Hundred Years' War.

Even now, Hexagone Française still considers England as a vassal state or outright territory of the Française and is treating it as a rebel nation. Mitotsudaira also grew up listening to her mother's stories about Joan of Arc from a young age. A mere two hundred years ago France almost came under the control of England, with its lands and people being ravished; and the girl who had led the salvation of France was burnt at the stake by the English.

It was a long time ago, that was what her mother would always tell her while laughing. That all of it now is the world of “stories.”

That is why it was not like she held any resentment towards England, however...

Her feelings were telling her she had to find some good points. They interfered with her country and plundered many things, however England had probably gone ahead and returned something.

But that was a negative way of thinking.

She believed that she should not bring historical problems into her personal relationship with Mary.

Therefore she was keeping her distance from Mary to make sure that part did not come out during an occasional comment.

However, while she was thinking about why had made the assertion that Mary would be a suitable substitute concerning the production of confectionery...

“—Mitotsudaira-sama?”

“Eh?”

In contrast to her, who was falling into a spiral of deep thought, Horizon called out to Mitotsudaira who seemed as if she was taken aback.

“Why Mary-sama?”

“Ah, umm, well...”

While feeling a one directional sense of disappointment about how if she did not explain they would not understand, Mitotsudaira spoke.

“In contrast to the confectionery of Hexagone Française, England has more goods which would be considered evolutions of bread. If I had to say Hexagone Française’s confection has a lot of small goods—“

“That is the type that I wish for, Mitotsudaira-sama. If it is an evolution of bread then it would be somewhat difficult to distinguish from the goods on the shelves.”

“...Is that right?”

“Judge. —The store master is originally from IZUMO. However, it seems that she is a magnificent real samurai and that baking confectionery and the like are only a one shot in her way of living. If I had to say, it seems like that she learned to make bread in England.”

Well, she nodded and behind her Masazumi softly laughed.

“Argent Loup confection classroom, huh. I wonder if this would be held regularly.”

“Masazumi...!”

Turning around, outside of the window a pair of black wings appeared holding a package.

“Eh!? What? Service submission classroom...!? What is that material? I’ll use it!? —Ah, this is that idiot’s goods.”

“Malga, would you please stop mishearing such strange things... If that package is a priestess work, then please forward it over to Asama’s place.”

Ah, Naruze looked at the name and address, then kicked the broken windowsill and did a backwards somersault.

It looked like she was correct.

Lately every night she had been flying around together with Naito testing the functionality of Schwarz Fräulein and Weiss Fräulein.

“As expected, you don’t use them during the day? I understand that the noise is dreadful after all.”

“They have bad fuel consumption. During the day since people and ships are flying we have to make quick stops and circumvent a lot of them, which makes the fuel costs nothing to sneeze at. That’s why at night, when it is only people we know, is the real deal. —For the time being, we have also been setting a *Geheimnis Sabbat* during the night, will you come watch?”

Judge, Horizon was the one who replied. She nodded and...

“I will bring the sweet that Mitotsudaira-sama has created with me.”

Hmm, Naruze showed a meaningful smile and flew above the windowsill.

“That sounds nice. —It has been a while, I’m looking forward to it.”

Mitotsudaira thought about protesting, however before she could voices echoed up from below.

“He ran away!” “He’s crawling!... He’s fast” “Eh, no stop!”

There among the screams of the students was the sound of footsteps mixed in...

“...It’s the Chancellor.”

“...Horizon will ignore this and go ahead with Kimi.”

"There's nothing to be done," Masazumi's voice was heard to say; however it suddenly stopped because Tsukinowa was opening a sign frame.

Masazumi who was looking at the sign frame slightly furrowed her brow, however when she noticed people watching her, she said:

"Ah, —please go on ahead. A message has come in from Neshinbara, so I just have to deal with that."

"If something happens, make sure to immediately let me know, okay?"

Judge; after hearing that answer, Mitotsudaira together with Horizon went out into the corridor. Everyone else, Mary for example, were at this point living while embracing a variety of thoughts.

●IZUMO Corporation●



"Sis! Sis! I descended down into IZUMO but there were a variety of goods from different brands so I did not know what I should buy! Give me any advice, please!"



"Let's see, having a basic look, there should be no problem if you buy from the IZUMO brand. It's a composite syndicate so you can go from a castle or ship to even a grain of rice. The representative brands of IZUMO are these below."

·**Izumo Industries:** IZUMO's parent organization. Actually, IZUMO is also a brand of the Izumo Industries, however since Izumo Industries has Shinto and aviation technologies as its primary concerns their positions are now reversed.

·**IZUMO:** IZUMO's main brand. Having Shinto, aviation technology and commodities as its primary concerns, it has developed at many levels by using the transportation capacity of the Shinto network that connects the entirety of the Far East. It is the largest enterprise of the Far East. Since the Shirasago Enterprises started dealing with serious goods, they have started developing into a variety of areas, including gag articles.

·**Shirasago Enterprise:** In contrast to IZUMO which liked to develop a variety of new products, with serious staple goods and Shinto-related as the core of the brand, they have actually changed into a different shrine. The headquarters are located below IZUMO on the land of the old IZUMO. They often get caught up in the messes of IZUMO and ends up in the role of facing those troubles.

·**Bizen:** A brand which handles ironworking related activities. It is located upon the southern provisional country border of M.H.H.R. and Hexagone Française and conducts the provision of Orei Metallo to both countries. Its expansion into other countries is called BIZEN.

·**INARIFOX:** An Inari-related development section that was merged during the Harmonic Unification War. Specialises in Mouse development.

·**Izumo Divine Transmission:** The provider responsible for the Shinto divine transmission network since ancient times. The foundation of the entire Far East's Shinto divine transmission network, after the Harmonic Unification War they also took charge of the heavenly god divine transmission network system of the Capital and the Ise force.



"There are also the Gods of War of MINO and the fast food stalwart Burger, however these should describe the ones related to the life on Musashi and the places located nearby. Musashi has the majority of Shinto goods and divine transmissions being of the Shirasago brand as a result of the Asama shrine being connected to Shirasago, however in other cities of the Far East, the names of IZUMO and Izumo Divine Transmission are more well-known. Each brand has goods that are considered their speciality, so it might be good to keep that in mind."



"Well, with all these being available I have to make sure to decide by genre."



"No, you're talking about eroge again."

Study - IZUMO Corporation

Toori: “Sis! Sis! I descended down into IZUMO but there were a variety of goods from different brands so I did not know what I should buy! Give me any advice, please!”

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Toori: “Well, with all these being available I have to make sure to decide by genre.”

Kimi: “No, you’re talking about erogé again.”

Chapter 03: Hard Worker of the Unfamiliar Site

CHAPTER 3

"Hard Worker of the Unfamiliar Site"



In a place one does not know
To make a living
What should be done

Point Allocation (Ability to Take Action)

In a place one does not know

To make a living

What should be done

Point Allocation (Ability to Take Action)



“Wow, a pear tart from below in IZUMO?”

Inside the grounds of a shrine which possessed an atrium as a ceiling, the blonde with a scarred face turned around with a surprised voice.

The location was the third underground floor at the rear of Okutama. Within the atrium established using the two side streets, the ascending stairs there led to the *torii* arch, where there was a grove and a shrine.

The name which was bestowed on the large *torii* archway on the bow side was “Asama Shrine”.

Through the waterfalls formed by the rivers falling from the surface section and the sunlight entering from the atrium, shadows and light intersected several places within the shrine grounds. Inside those shrine grounds the one who had spoken the previous words was the priestess-styled inner-suit figure of Mary.

She, while taking the paper box offered to her, said:

“Is it all right? Lady Adele, is it alright for me to accept this?”

Judge, the one who nodded was the blue jersey clad figure of Adele.

“These are provisions provided by ‘Musashi’ and the others to the official positions and important offices. Earlier when purchasing tableware from down

below, ‘Musashi’ requested me to carry them with me once I returned in order to reduce her load. Please have it together with the 1st Special Duty Officer. — Hey!”

Adele who was speaking, directed those final words to the surrounding pack of shadows jumping around.

It was the dogs.

There were dogs on leashes and off leash as well as young, adult and old. With single word from Adele, the dogs, with a stray white dog in the middle, sat down all at once. Adele faced the dogs and said.

“This is where you get your water from, okay? Anything else is prohibited. The toilet is also at the prescribed location.”

The dogs let out a single loud bark as if to nod.

Good, Adele nodded and began to provide the feed she had received from pedestrians in orderly fashion. Turning around and looking, Mary was there smiling.

“...However, well, I would never have thought that you would take a part-time job as a priestess at the Asama Shrine.”



She began to think that if you think about it historically, this was definitely a chaotic situation; also...

...These are the 1st Special Duty Officer's tastes.

She also wanted to say that aloud; however, Adele remained silent. After all, she being a normal individual meant that she was not someone who should become too deeply involved with royalty or deviants.

However Mary, with a white inner suit as the base and red tights while shaking the tail ballast with the broom which hung at her waist could be definitely seen to look good.

Mary showed a smile her way.

“I am only doing things such as cleaning, tidying and preparing the store. I think it would be good if I could work more... However, I lack a proper understanding of Shinto, so I'm depending on these a little.”

There was a small computer hanging from the hard point on her waist. What was displayed there was an explanation of Shinto formulas and spells. She was studying in her own way, and after Adele understood that, she said:

“After all, to continue your inheritance of Mary's name you are unable to discard the Catholic religion. However, being on board Musashi and continuing like that would be a bit of a difficult situation... That’s why I suggested you to use the “Hidden” Catholic setting.”

“Judge, normally it seems the “Hidden” setting was used for believers of Shinto who wished to believe in Catholicism; however since my situation would be the reverse, it apparently makes the application complicated.”

So she was working at the shrine to “demonstrate her belief” in order to lessen the application conditions.

However, Adele thought, like she who only believed in Catholicism, she was able to respect her beliefs in everyday life; and if Asama was there acting as an intermediary it was simple to achieve messaging. But...

“Why did you say that you wanted to understand Shinto?”

Eh? After forming the words, Mary hesitated and her cheeks reddened.

“If I'm the same as Master Tenzou, there will not be many inconveniences...”

If any of our class were here at the moment, the fate of the 1st Special Duty would have been sealed tomorrow. I'm glad it was me. I'll let him off with just spreading it over the net.

However, Mary bowed her head in her direction.

“—In any case, thank you for everything back in England.”

“Eh? Ah No, after all I didn't cause a ruckus at the Tower of London nor had any real activity during Armada. I was waiting for maintenance on my mobile shell so it was pretty easy-going for me.”

More importantly...

“Mary, how are you feeling at the moment?”

“Judge, I can talk with the neighbours, I can work here, cook food and sew; there's a lot I can do. The Far East also has many books which allows me to enjoy my time here.”

“Have you descended into IZUMO?”

No, she showed something like a troubled smile.

“My free time did not match with Master Tenzou. He has his job down at the engineering section, after all.”

That guy, leaving behind his blonde large-breasted wife in priestess clothes, what exactly is he doing. Adele who was about to mentally enter a preaching stance, instead lightly stopped her breath at Mary's next words.

“Also, even if it is only IZUMO, as someone who was born in England I feel some difficulty when it comes to the territory of Hexagone Française. I am also meant to have gotten married in Hexagone Française after all.”

Hearing the difficult content of those words said without any hesitation, Adele thought of the word “consideration.”

Her mother and father were both from Hexagone Française, however she was born on Musashi. There was also her father who had lost his place within Hexagone Française and taught her to place a greater value on her existence as a vassal over her country. She was a Catholic, a vassal and from a lineage of Hexagone Française; however, she was a resident of Musashi.

That is why she realised that Mitotsudaira and Mary were keeping a distance from each other. Like her, they both held the thinking of the era of knights, however following her birth one held a different type of awareness towards her home country. That was Mitotsudaira.

There was probably a similar situation for Mary. She bitterly smiled.

“...At the point when you feel that you should not be aware that it is already hopeless, you then think once again that is also hopeless; however you wonder if it is truly hopeless, and it goes around in repetition.”

However...

“I talked with Master Tenzou about going down to IZUMO, —I asked about a variety of purchases at IZUMO, and he will help on a later date. It was something easy to solve.”



“Really...”

Adele thought, that 1st Special Duty is doing quite well.

Arguably, she was moved emotionally. That is why Adele first went to go about her business.

“So, umm, I’m sorry, where’s Asama?”

“Eh? Umm, earlier she was peering under the veranda and then doing something about the arrangements for a seal... However, now she said something about stacking firewood out front towards the staircase so she is doing the cleansing of firewood in the forest around the back.”

Something happened with someone close...

She nodded on the inside, however it would be better not to let Mary know the particulars.

However Mary, who was tilting her head, looked to the dogs then.

“Adele, you were at IZUMO for shopping... and walking your pets?”

“Eh? Well, during the morning and evening, I do a running training. However, since I've been doing it from a while ago the dogs thought I would play with them and continued to follow me. Then they gradually continued to increase in number, and lately this has become some sort of specialty with people who have the daily routine of throwing them treats when I pass; and people who seem too busy to take theirs for a walk, leave it to me.”

“Judge. It is very lively.”

Receiving an appropriate follow-up was something to be grateful for.

However, well...

“And this was something that Asama’s father thought up: attaching talismans to these dogs and have them run which would then conduct the ship’s tuning. By using the purification talismans ‘space’ created by the practitioners of Shinto as a rudimentary training... well even if they are badly made, we attach these which are gathered for free and attempt to remove the localized distortions within the vessel. In short, guard dogs to prevent the occurrence of phenomena.”

However, if Asama was busy dealing with the misconduct of someone close...

“I guess it will not be happening today. Well, lately and due to the repair of Musashi, even if there is a distortion the poor part should have disappeared, so it should be okay.”

I also wish to view the new tableware I bought to replace the tableware broken during Musashi's full turn the other day, when it's placed on the table. That's why Adele thought she would return home; however, Mary said...

“Lady Adele, it is almost time for my break, so how about this?”

She held up the box with the pear tart.

“Will you have it together with me? We can have Asama and other part timers join us.”

There is a god...! Adele thought from the bottom of her heart. That a suggestion with no downside would bring about such sense of awe! Ah, after this long time Adele was glad that this person was not executed.

Then in front of her, the goddess directed a smile her way.

“It is quite large after all. I shall have what is left over together with Master Tenzou.”

While she was wondering whether this was all right, black wings descended from the sky.

Descending and before touching the ground, spreading her wings as if striking the atmosphere and regaining her posture was...

“? ...Are you working?”

“Judge, can you give this to Asama for me? —It's nothing important.”

“T-That's a strange way of describing something...!”

“Oh, Naruze, we were just thinking about having some tea; however...”

Hmm, Naruze looked at the paper box that Mary was holding. Then she directed her gaze below to the dogs that were looking up at her wings with great interest.

“We received ours a little while ago, but I guess it would be fine to have that tomorrow. —Okay, while it isn’t a Technohexen tea party I’ll join you for a bit.”

“4th Special Duty, what about your work?”

“Margot should also currently be taking a break.”

Naruze pointed in the port side direction, towards Tama.

Then she pointed towards Mary with a smile on her face, and what she said was...

“—Judge, over where your husband and Naomasa are working.”



"To continue training even though it is your break time is admirable, Muneshigeshi."

A single voice echoed around the outside front wall section of Tama which basked in the sun of the second day of the month.

As a result of damage to the outer wall, this location was one of the places where footholds had been installed for repairs. There were many people being hired, not just in the maintenance or the repairs section, as the entire engineering division was conducting repairs throughout Musashi; however...

“Well, it is good that I have found a place to work where I can also complete my training. Don’t you agree, Tenzou?”

Judge, holding his hand to the white steel wall was the jacket-less figure of Tenzou.

“The fact that Naomasa and Mitotsudaira also participate is something to be highly appreciative of. Well then, about today's training it's fine, right Muneshige-shi?”

When he turned around in front of him was a single young married couple who were on top of a widely created foothold.

It was Muneshige who was wearing a work vest and Gin who was clad in a Tres España uniform.

Looking at the two of them, Tenzou thought the following.

...Well, it is surprising that we managed to join together with the Tachibana married couple.

After all, it was only about two weeks ago when those two were still considered the enemy.

However now those two had submitted an application to Tres España for the removal of their inherited names. While Muneshige's had been accepted, it was heard that Gin's was still pending.

...That is due to Gin having her father also being a member of the Tachibana lineage.

Masazumi had made a deal with Tres España such that if the individual in question wishes to be one of Musashi's crew, they will treat them as a resident of the Far East, and with that settled things with Tres España. In other words, as long as they remained on Musashi, they were neither residents of Tres España or Musashi but “Far East residents” as the original Tachibana clan.

In reality it could be said that Gin's future was depending on what she wanted to do with herself.

This was not Gin's comment. However, if Gin chose to remain with Muneshige who has had his inherited name revoked... he was thinking about doubling his efforts for the time when he would once again inherit the name.

Anyhow, Tenzou stopped that train of thought and went to deal with the issue at hand. What needed to be done now was...

“Advancing the rehabilitation training of Muneshige-dono’s legs to the next stage.”



“Is it all right?”

Tenzou lifted his hand slightly in the direction of Naomasa. With that, Naomasa cut one part from the rolled paper-like object she was gripping with her artificial arms and formed a pipe.

“Here.”

Tenzou caught the somewhat heavy solid paper pipe which was tossed over to him. Then when he held that rolled up paper-like object and showed it to the Tachibana couple. Gin tilted her neck and spoke.

“...A Shinto deity talisman to repair damaged metallic parts. It provides an artificial life force to metal and using ether as a basis, conducts an automated repair. It is however considered a prohibited technique by Catholics due to being similar to the act of God...”

Gin shifted her eyes to the side. Where she shifted her eyes there was multiple white talismans which were attached to the wall. All of that white was identical to the one which Tenzou over here was holding.

Then Naomasa also tilted her gaze towards the white horizontal line.

“Honestly, this is an ineffective method of repair. Well, for emergencies and light damage such as light scratches where it would be wasteful to replace the plating it can be useful.”

“Judge, normally you assemble a foothold and then attach them horizontally in an orderly fashion—”

Tenzou pointed a position which was approximately twenty meters above. Floating there on a broom it was someone with golden wings who waved her hand in this direction. It was Naito. She raised her hand next to her mouth and said.

“From what I can tell the repairs in this area aren't done properly.”

Naito poked a section of the outer wall with the tip of her broom. Seeing that, Naomasa nodded.

“Since this area is my responsibility, do you think you could give it a try?”

With that question, Muneshige looked up at the wall which seemed perpendicular.

“You’re telling me to climb this?”

Nope, Tenzou spoke.

“—I’m telling you to run.”



I see, is what Gin thought. There was really value in consulting with the ninja 1st Special Duty Officer who seemed knowledgeable about occupations that could be used for training.

“At first, when I heard that it was work that could serve as training, I thought it was simply manual labour like carrying materials and assisting in creating footholds...”

Gin looked up at wall.

“That served as basic training, with the next stage being running up this near perpendicular wall?”

Inquiring to Muneshige who was beside her, he directed a sharp gaze towards the ninja. The proposed question was...

“—Without a run-up?”

The way that this person was already seriously looking at this ninja conduct was something that Gin thought enviously of. There the ninja lightly nodded in response to Muneshige and with the head indicated towards his legs.

“Looking at the way that you are walking, you seem to be overly conscious of your knees.”

“—Certainly, since I damaged my ligaments I have developed a tendency to protect them.”

“I see. Then I wish for you to answer the next question honestly.”

That was...

“—Have your injuries completely healed?”

Gin heard Muneshige’s answer in response to the ninja’s question.

“—Judge.”

Previously he had replied with Tes.

However, now both he and I are different.

Not different, we have just tried to start our new selves. Thinking that was a meaningful answer, Gin slightly lowered her head to the ninja,

“Do not worry, please provide me of instructions without holding anything back.”

“Judge, in that case I will have you understand the main aim here.”

Saying that, the ninja vanished.



...!?

The reason Gin reflectively looked upwards was not a result of her sense of sight, but a matter of intuition.

Sure enough, there looking above her head at the surface of the wall, the shadow of the ninja was already running at a position higher than ten meters.

Nimble.

He was not climbing. The ninja was running on the wall as if he was floating with every step.

It was martial arts. It was pure martial arts with no ether light at all being emitted.

However, usually if you were to climb, you would lose momentum and fall back to the ground. That's why...

“—Muneshige-sama, that martial art...”

“Judge, in order to continue going upwards, it is important to keep accelerating faster than you are falling.”

To achieve that...

“Compared to a normal running style, you do not use your legs to kick. Instead, you use the sole of your forward leg to hang onto the wall, and then, so as to not to lose momentum, you repeatedly pull yourself forward in a short cycle.”

It was not kicking behind and propelling the body forward but rather hanging on and pulling the body forward.

I see, Gin thought.

...Up until now as a result of carrying materials in an unstable environment, the kicking and pushing was done as rehabilitation and now, this pulling movement was the next stage of his rehabilitation.

“Ju—”

Gin, who was going to say that it made sense, suddenly stopped.

“Is this it?”

In the sky beside the nodding Technohexen, the ninja was standing on the wall.



...*Huh?*

In front of Gin's gaze the ninja was standing on the surface on the wall.

He had his right leg slightly lowered and while making his body seemingly slightly fall onto the wall, he apparently stood on the wall with a relaxed atmosphere.

In front of her, momentarily dumbstruck, was Musashi's 6th Special Duty Officer who folded her arms and formed the following words:

“—Ninja are apparently able to always stand on top of a still blade. Well, even though he looks like that, here on-board Musashi he is one of our most highly talented ninja; so it is always good to observe him.”

While those words continued, the ninja, who while continuing to talk to the fallen angel, tilted his body slightly forward towards the wall. Thinking that he was going to fall...

“There is some damage over here.”

The ninja remained on the wall like nothing and moved to the left.

Then as if following the fingertips of the Technohexen, he attached a talisman to the wall, then using his fingers and grasping the slight thickness of the talisman, he rotated his body in the opposite direction.

“Naito, here you go.”

From his breast pocket he pulled out a bamboo can of “Saint Max George Coffee” and passed it over to the Technohexen. In his movements there was no sense of him rushing or hurrying. He moved with an air of composure.

From there, the ninja turned his body and fluttered through the air.

“Well then.”

Without any sound or lowering his body, he simply descended onto the foothold.

The unstable foothold did not shake or make a sound.

...Unbelievable.

Musashi’s 1st Special Duty Officer usually served a decoy role during battles and even at England’s Tower of London he had not participated in any direct combat. However even then...

“I see, I understand.”

Seeing the ninja who was approaching this direction, Gin muttered.

“What saved Mary Stuart was not just the actions of those around him.”

“—Hmm? Is there something wrong?”

I wonder if the ninja who tilted his neck had not realized his ability. No...

...If he had not realized it, then there was no way he would be displaying it.

He had self-awareness about his own abilities. However for those around him, this was a matter of fact. That was why it was not pointed out by them.

With respect to that fact...

“...It is the same as us in the past. I wonder if this is also that kind of place, Muneshige-sama.”

“Judge, so it seems.”

While saying that, he moved forward.

With that sudden movement, she looked up and in the corners of Muneshige's mouth there was a smile that seemed as if he was trying to tolerate something.

...Good grief. Even if he had only just received permission for everyday activities from the treatment facility.

This person likes this kind of stuff; being challenged.



Muneshige, while nodding to Tenzou's words who said the area was right beneath the target, stood in front of the wall. Then sending a fleeting glance in the direction of Tenzou, said.

“—Thank you for all the arrangements and such.”

Don't worry about it; there Tenzou waved his hand from side to side.

“I don't have the personality or the position to be teaching people. That's why after this assignment, I want you to learn on your own, is that all right?”

In other words that was...

“...In the 1st Special Duty Officer's opinion, by the time I am able to complete this task, it will be that I have achieved a sufficient ability?”

It is also that, however Tenzou while scratching his head shrugged his shoulders.

“If you can complete this, then the places where you can work aboard Musashi will increase, you know?”

Judge, Muneshige laughed. He had realized lately that Musashi was constantly facing a lack of personnel, so engineering, maintenance and repairs jobs were always available. Among those jobs, the ones with the good pay were work on the outer wall or in high places.

Muneshige's thinking was that the most necessary thing for newcomers was money.

...In that case, the challenge will be whether my legs can take on those tasks.

Muneshige placed his right leg on the wall. Then...

“...Well then.”

He went.



Muneshige ran up the wall.

He was beginning to understand the method. By the third step, he had grasped most of the tempo.

That's why he thought he could do it, however...

“Oh!”

At the seventh step he suddenly began to lose speed.

He understood the reason quite well.

He was holding power towards the leg which he was using to pull his body up for too long.

...His leg power had decreased by a lot.

He thought that if it had been the past him, he could have gone further.

Actually he thought that in his current form, he could still go about three more meters, making a total of twelve meters, however Muneshige...

“—”

At the ten meter mark of the twenty meters that he was meant to run he kicked the wall.

He did a backwards somersault, entered a landing posture and there from far above his head the Technohexen exclaimed.

“Ah. —Even though I waited with the coffee.”

Before he could assert he was sorry, he landed on the foothold.

Together with a banging sound, the wooden floor and the strengthened bamboo of the foothold let out a screeching sound. Thinking that it was an unsightly landing, he stood up and looked and there was Gin who had come with a towel.

He realized that his entire body was covered in sweat.

Tenzou also finally came.

“Okay. How splendid. Getting that far on your first time is pretty good. As expected.”

In response to his words, Muneshige went to say something. However...

“—”

There was a weight from the depth of his chest.

It was oxygen deprivation. As a result of extreme tension and movement, light oxygen deprivation symptoms had occurred and the depth of his chest felt heavy.

...After all, surprisingly enough I don't do these types of movements much.

Muneshige looked upwards at the ten meter position, and carved it into his heart. He could make it up to that position.

There before he could say anything to Tenzou who had come to his side, Gin who was next to him lightly bowed her head.

“...Thank you very much. However Muneshige-sama, it did seem like you could have gone a little further—”

At Gin's prompting words, Muneshige nodded his head. He breathed air into his lungs and lightened his body.

“Judge. —However I have to land afterwards.”

Muneshige thought back about his last landing. He had lowered his body to its limit, however the shock from his soles had not disappeared. That was to say that the springs of his muscle strength and sense of balance had decreased.

“It think that if I had gone any higher than that, something would have gone wrong with my landing.”

“Judge. —The best way is to not try the impossible, if you can manage that, then afterwards you will improve on your own. In no time you will be better than you were before.”

Tenzou said that and looked over everyone.

“Well then, shall we take an official break? I believe we can do something about drinks—”

“Ah, shall I go buy them? Even though I’m like this now, I used to be a deliverer in the postal service.”

“No, no. Have this.” Tenzou waved his hand around his waist and returned it.

Seeing several bamboo cans were hanging from his hand, Gin muttered:

“...You’re not saying you did that just now with all that weight attached?”

That was...

“...Almost as if you’re a speedy gofer all the time.”

“G-Gin, wasn’t that a bit harsh! Ah, I’m sorry!”

“No, that way of being at ease is also more comfortable for me.”

Saying that, the ninja paused for a moment. Then he looked in the west direction.

There was IZUMO and the path leading to it.

There was a flow of movement on the dirt path. With the tremor of a brown hair that could also be seen as a gathering of brown wind...

“Would that be Kimi-dono?”

Kimi was heading in the direction of IZUMO. However, she walked towards a suburban house which was along the way.



Beneath the afternoon sky danced a brown color.

It was hair. The girl who was wearing a Far East uniform modified into something suiting a dancing girl was looking up at the sky.

It was Kimi.

The place where she was basking in the western wind was a garden of a suburban house at IZUMO.

The spacious garden was enclosed by a fence. It was a fence which was entwined with Japanese Morning Glory shoots that still had no flowers.

Raising one's face and looking up from there it was possible to overlook everything in the surrounding scenery.

To the east was Musashi, to the south was the countryside and forest; and then to the north and west there was the city of IZUMO, where a massive multistory shrine combined with a white development center could be seen.

In this garden which took a distance from all of these was a house with a southern facing thatched roof.

It was just one of the many farm-like buildings in the suburb. It was that kind of house and farm.

Then after Kimi had looked in all four directions she directed her gaze to the east, towards Musashi.

“—Well then.”

Beneath the blue of the early summer and the low clouds, there was a massive black and white ship. From her current position, the whole aspect of the starboard side looked as if a cliff of great length.

The dancing girl, while entwining her hair that was being blown about by the wind around her arm, let out a small laugh.

“Looking from below makes it seem so large. Don't you think so, Uzy?”

Calling out, there from the gap in her chest a wavy-haired little girl Mouse crawled out and nodded.

She clapped her hands once and pulled out a sign frame. The contents were...

Silver Wolf: “Kimi, Horizon has headed that way. Can you see her?”

Wise Sister: “Easily wolf. From just now though.”

As if following Musashi’s outer wall, Kimi moved her sight downwards.

On one of the several bridges connected to Musashi, there were two shadows on the road heading in this direction.

There, coming along between the shelter-belt forest road which had a slight heat haze was...

“Haha, as I thought, foolish brother chose to pass. With a lady attendant as your escort, you seem to be on your leisurely way, Horizon.”

While still far away, Kimi saw the silver hair which seemed as if it was immersed in the heat haze come along. *Well then*, without changing her posture Kimi, turned her back on Horizon and Futayo.

Wise Sister: “Mitotsudaira, in that case you should come down here as well. Have you longed for your mother’s scent so much that you can’t come down? You being too considerate of Mary is also something you should avoid...”

Silver Wolf: “This way of speaking...!”

Aha, Kimi softly laughed, however she lightly lowered her eyebrows.

Looking at the sign frame, she said.

“Well, do your best.”

Leaving a voice which wouldn’t reach, she then looked forward, to the north.

There was a city.

In the surroundings there were rice-plant paddies and irrigation channels; within the north side there was a town, with a Shinto torii gate and a group of research facilities that could be seen as a massive fortress. On the far side of the Shinto Arch there was a staircase which spanned over several kilometers, and above that a shrine which was...

“Izumo-Kitsuki-Taisha. —The core of the Large Company IZUMO; from the age of the gods it has been the large financial support of the gods and is now what the citizens of the Far East rely upon... Hmm.”

She took a breath.

“I wonder what Horizon will think meeting my grandmother who lives in a place like this?”

“'Lives in a place like this' is quite a thing to say, Kimi.”

From the depths of the house, from the direction of the tatami mat floor which received the rays of the sun there was a voice.

It was a woman's slightly subdued voice.

“—Grandmother”

“How many times before you understand do I have tell you that either Mitsu or Grandma are fine. I'm not someone who needs that much respect.”

Appearing from the house frontage there was an elderly woman who was wearing the clothing of the Far East with the front closed as many married people had it, and whose hair had faded to a light brown.

“So? Horizon is alive? I heard about Mikawa and the rest. Here and there were disturbances and wariness. Well then, the reason you came here wasn't to learn about ritual techniques or smiting, was it? —What did you come here for?”

“As far as we know, for the moment we want to hear the oldest story that we can.”

What stories? In regards to her grandmother's question, Kimi answered like this:

“About Horizon's mother. Mother would not talk about it... however, what about Grandmother? Is there anything that you can say in front of Horizon herself? After all, Horizon may have lost her memories but it is not like she has lost her past. There is a lot she should know—”

“She should know?”

Haha, Kimi nodded her head.

“Horizon might experience sadness if she were to suddenly come to face her past without knowing anything, you know? If that happens, foolish brother might become discouraged. That is also something that I do not wish for.”

That's why Kimi directed her gaze to the silver hair which was walking there from far away and said.

“For the sake of Horizon who knows nothing... Will you let her hear your words so that she can confront that past?”

Chapter 04: Assemblers under the Eaves

CHAPTER 4

"Assemblers under the Eaves"



Why is it that
The more you try to listen to a story
The more you end up telling one
Point Allocation (Mutual Exchange)

Why is it that

The more you try to listen to a story

The more you end up telling one

Point Allocation (Mutual Exchange)



Beneath the blue sky of IZUMO and beneath the eaves there was the muttered voice of an elderly woman.

“That’s right... Horizon, about your mother...”

There on the veranda, the speaking Mitsu was sitting traditionally on top of a cushion with Horizon seated beside her.

In front of her, Kimi and Futayo had put on gloves and were in the yard searching through the vegetable garden.

“Ah, this is a potato! Grandmother, even though it is still widely regarded as a prohibited good... —Confiscated! It’s confiscated!”

“Hmm, the edamame which my father liked are grown here, Kimi-dono. —As an offering to my father's spirit, I think I may also take possession of some.”

“Boiled in salt—”

“I had some leftovers so as I said you could do as you please, but what exactly did you come here to do.”

Mitsu said that with half-open eyes; however the two women didn’t listen. That’s why Mitsu paused for a moment and directed her question to Horizon, who was drinking tea by her side.

“Horizon? Why exactly did you come here?”



Why did you come here? The questioned Horizon considered that.

At first it was just because Kimi-sama had invited me...

She considered it. If she had rather to say the reason she came, that was...

“The reason is that I thought it would be okay to come.”

“It's nice being condescending.”

Judge. Horizon raised her right thumb to show Mitsu and she was already returning the same action.

“.....”

The two women exchanged gazes, both nodded and then Horizon once again opened her mouth.

“...Anyway, at first I thought that it was meaningless. Even now, I am still conjecturing whether that is true.”

“You’re very straightforward.”

Once again the two of them raised their thumbs. After that, Horizon said.

“Judge, thank you very much. However Toori-sama went ‘Ah!? I am not going. I am definitely not going! I can’t go for your sake!’ and acted stubborn, so I changed my mind and decided I had to come.”

“How rebellious.”

She raised her thumb.

“Judge, thank you very much. In any case, to tell the truth it is a rare occurrence for me to disembark from Musashi; so as a method of study, it is also valid.”

Then, since she had come, she had only one purpose.

“The current purpose is to hear about Horizon’s mother, that is all.”

“I see.”

Mitsu nodded her head. Then she tilted her head and asked the following.

“Why is it you want to know?”

It was a simple question, so that is why she immediately answered. The contents of her reply were...

“It is because I want to be able to understand my mother.”

“Why?”

“If I can understand her, then the eventual sadness will be reduced. Even if I am no longer able to exchange words with that person, I can think about her; and it is possible for me to inherit her will.”

“Well then. —Let us do something like a little test. About how much meaning talking about the past has for you. A test to measure that.”

“Judge, Please do as you wish.”

That was a good answer, Mitsu said. There with a faint smile...

“Okay, I am going to ask? You are saying that understanding is important? In that case... if you can understand something, then is it okay to lose it?”



Oh?, Horizon thought. She had had a similar discussion but from the opposing stance. It was in London, England, during that act Toori had called a date. Date, that was an English word. To translate it to Japanese, it was “going out”. Toori wanted really badly to go on a date with Horizon, so it was strange.

In any case, considering the words he had said at that time...

What had he replied with when she had said the same words that Mitsu had just spoken?

...*Ah*.

She remembered, and it was something she could accept; that’s why Horizon said the following:

“That is not correct.”

While trying to stand on the opposite parallel line, she had the feeling that she could somehow understand the words that she had been told at that time.

“There is nothing that is okay to lose, that is what I am thinking.”

While conducting multiple layers of judgment, Horizon formed her words. After thinking over the things which he had told her in the past, she began to speak.

“That is why I do not wish to understand just so that I will be okay with losing something... Unfortunately, everything will eventually be lost; however if you can understand and enjoy spending time together, even when that time unexpectedly comes—”

Was it this kind of thing?

“Would it not be possible to understand what happens at that time? That is my conjecture.”



“That’s an idealistic thought.”

With Mitsu’s words Horizon simply asked the following:

“Is that what you determine? That it is nothing but an ideal?”

Judge, Mitsu who was resting her chin in her hands spoke.

“If you die, no matter how much time you spend together it is still sad for those who are left behind. It was the same for my husband and for my parents.”

“Is it not possible to have an understanding about losing something?”

“The contents of your question are quite harsh.”

The two of them raised their thumbs.

However, Horizon did not say that she was sorry in response to Mitsu’s words. If she apologized for asking something that was necessary to her, it would mean that she needed to lower her head. That’s why...

“I understand that this will change our topic, but I would like to request a lecture. —Advice on how to resolve the sadness of loss.”

“Those are some nice words.”

Mitsu laughed and then she said.

“Understanding the deceased is quite a difficult task. After all, they are already gone, and on the other hand, there is no way to confirm anything more than that. That’s why as a reference for you who is trying to learn about your mother, I will tell you a bit of my story. You may experience the same amount of hardship, after all.”

“There are hardships?”

Mitsu responded that there were.

“My mother, well that would be the great-grandmother of that kid out there who is digging up potatoes. That great-grandmother, when Toori and Kimi were in elementary school... was it the fifth year?”

“Haha, it was the fourth year, so eight years ago. Have things become a bit unclear?” asked Kimi playfully.

“You just grew up fast because you have nothing above your neck. —Well in that year, Musashi’s route was an eastern circulation via Bizen. It just happened that they came to Hexagone Française's northern IZUMO during the end of the year. However, their great-grandmother was in a bad condition and they wouldn’t make it here in time at that rate. However—”

Mitsu pointed in direction south.

“The deal that Musashi made over in the direction of K.P.A. Italia. —Due to Hashiba starting their full-scale movements, the rule of Nagahama began and the route was no longer usable; so they were forced to stop at Bizen IZUMO at the southern country border of Hexagone Française. However the Pope-Chancellor of K.P.A. Italia Innocentius allowed trade with the surrounding countries; and in order to obtain repair parts, there were permitted a limited capacity of cargo ships to come and go between IZUMO. So there were also a variety of political factors to continue the trade of other countries with Musashi.”

“That was—”

“They came here, however it was only Toori and Kimi. The border controls were apparently soft on children...”

Hey...

“Kimi, what sort of situation was that?”



With Mitsu's question, Kimi raised her body with a state of disappointment within Horizon's gaze.

"Don't you remember?"

Well, Kimi folded her arms.

Then she looked over this way and pointed to the eastern sky and Musashi.

"That foolish brother did, right? He suddenly knocked on my door and said 'Let's go Sis. If Mum were to find out it would be trouble, so let's go while we can.' It seems like he had requested it earnestly of the people in the Provisional Council. Thinking about it now, it is a lot easier for the other side to accept something when it comes from children wanting to go to give their final greeting to a relative.

"Now? Then, at that time?"

"As the adults were suspicious, I was thinking that if something happened I had to protect my foolish brother."

I see, Horizon nodded. She was interested in the fact that Futayo seemed to be getting excited over the fact that the turnip had long roots, however at the moment hearing the rest of the story was more important.

That's why Horizon returned her gaze to Mitsu. She thought that she wanted to hear the remainder of the story.

"So that was the way that Toori-sama and Kimi-sama were able to come? Apart from that... did anything else happen?"

"Judge, the two of them only spent a few ordinary days here. After that... on the way back, you returned to the halted Musashi at Bizen IZUMO by carriage and on foot, didn't you?"

“So? Since the schedule didn’t match up with the cargo vessel, we returned while being assisted by some kind people. On the way back too much stuff happened; even if I talked about it, no one would believe me so that is why I don’t talk about it.”

Is that so, Mitsu said. Then she looked this way and paused with a smile.

“Horizon listen, okay? After some time had passed, a letter arrived from my stupid daughter on board Musashi saying ‘I locked up those two who had returned in their rooms for two or three days.’ Then...”

“Then?”

At the time when she was wondering what had occurred.

Mitsu looked up at the sky and spoke.

“Their great-grandmother, in other words my mother, smiled.”



“That was...”

Horizon thought that was a normal, everyday reaction. There was a difference between people about the value of the existence called great-grandchildren; however, if they had arrived home safely then you would be smiling.

However...

...In that case, why was Mitsu especially remembering that smile?

She didn’t understand. That is why Horizon did not speak.

“__”

However after being silenced, in front of her Mitsu tilted her brown teacup towards her mouth. Then...

“I wonder why!”

“What is it?”

Ah.

“Mother laughed and spoke. —I don’t know whether my life was meaningful, however if my grandchildren who are connected through my soul came to visit me before I go... I think I lived a proper way of life if it meant they came.”

“That was...”

She realized that she was saying the same words as before.

The meaning that the words Mitsu said was something she thought Horizon would understand; however, she did not. That was why she stopped her words part-way through.

“—I apologize. I am unable to reach an understanding.”

“That is a good thing. After all, I don’t really understand it either. That’s why I told you this story.”

There, Mitsu showed her first bitter smile. Then she adjusted her chin in her hands.

“It is not like my mother spent a lot of time together with Toori and Kimi. After my mother died, I also became sad and wept. However... I think mother at the very least blessed the satisfaction that she felt towards Toori and Kimi.”

Do you understand? Mitsu said, and she then suddenly looked at the yard.

“I wonder what form the satisfaction of understanding takes. —Hey, Kimi!”

“Haha, what is it? I’m in a good mood today so I’ll make an answer across generations, okay?”

“Well then, —Kimi, how was it at that time when you and Toori returned to Musashi? Did you think about anything regarding my mother?”

“Actually grandmother, there’s no way that I remember something from that long ago.”

Ah, however Kimi formed a wry smile.

“Foolish brother said this. —That our great-grandmother was cute. That she was thankful, thankful towards everything, that her being delighted was cute.”

With those words, Horizon nodded.

“Judge. I see, I have understood that part.”

Horizon then said the following with the frank opinion that had formed inside her heart.

“Toori-sama is indiscriminate when it comes to raising flags.”



The women fell silent and the grandma had eye contact with her grandchild.

After that, the grandchild instructed “calm down” with her hand, and the grandma nodded. After a while the grandchild cleared her throat and spoke to Horizon.

“Okay? Horizon. It’s alright because they are relatives, you know? — You can’t conquer them.”

“In other words, it will be added as part of the supplementary DVD.”

The grandchild looked at her grandma.

“—Grandmother, what should I do at a time like this.”

“How should I know.”

Anyway, said Mitsu. Then, saying however to connect her sentences, she once again took a breath.

“...Ah well, so it is true that Toori looked at my mother in such a way. My mother ended her life being thankful for a lot of things.”

...Ended her life being thankful...?

Horizon repeated Mitsu's words within her heart.

Then Horizon thought this.

.....I don't understand.

Why had the fact that the two, Toori and Kimi, had come led to being thankful about anything and everything.

Why had Mitsu's mother...

“Why was she thankful? Should the thankful ones not be the later generation who had been given birth to and received their upbringing?”

“Horizon.”

Mitsu, while turning back this way asked the following.

“—Do you think that something that has completed its purpose is no longer necessary?”

Judge, is what Horizon began to answer. After all, a machine which had completed its purpose will become an unnecessary, useless object. Once you switch to a new good, it is fine for the old good to be disassembled and recycled.

That's why Horizon started to voice an affirmative response.

...*No*.

Composing her thoughts, Horizon shook her head to the side.

"I do not think that is true."

"Why not?"

"That is because Horizon was once like that."

That was...

"One may think their purpose is over, and while that may be correct, ...being more important than you think you are to someone else is something that usually happens."

Even Horizon, who believed that she was nothing, was not abandoned at Mikawa.

It was not just her. At England it was the same for Mary, so in that case... perhaps it was the same for others.

That was why...

"If you wish to decide that you are unnecessary, then you must ask everyone in the entire world. Also not just those people in the same generation, but also those in the following generations. The reason being is that I am now thinking about wanting to know my mother. In my mother's generation, even if her mother had been shunned by the entire world, at this very moment I, of the following generation, wish for her."

"That is a good answer."

The two of them raised their thumbs.

So then, Horizon connected her thinking to the previous topic. The reason why Mitsu's mother was thankful for everything was...

“She was able to believe that not just the physical things in front of your eyes, but also the things beyond such as their thoughts of her, were important to them. ...That due to this, two people who were connected to her by blood had come from far away.”

“That’s right. That’s why it will be good to remember that.”

“What would?”

Ah, Mitsu spoke.

“Your mother is not here, however she is glad that you have come here. — Indeed, so am I who has once again formed a connection with you as well.”

“—”

Mitsu formed words as if to connect everything together. Putting *You understand?* as a preface, she spoke again.

“I was also one of those people who thought of meeting the lost you. Well, to you it might be just a test. That’s why I am trying to teach you to think that meeting me was a good thing.”

That was...

“About your mother.”



“About... my mother?”

Horizon slightly prepared her consciousness.

She had come here wanting to know about her mother.

However, she had absolutely no memories of her mother.

It was certain that she had one. After all she was here, however...

...What kind of person was my mother?

Was it a result of Phylargia that she wished to follow up on the doubt she had suddenly thought up? That thought immediately became words, turning it into a question. The words which escaped from her mouth were...

“Mitsu-sama, Horizon's mother was...”

“There isn't much I can say.”

Towards she who had become unable to form those words, the old woman showed eyes which looked like the shape of a smile.

“Your mother was a brilliant student. She came to IZUMO during her middle school years; at the time I was at high school doing ritual Shinto spell and ether research when she came to see me. She was doing ley line research and wanted knowledge of the Far East formulas.

“Mitsu-sama, you used to be an instructor?”

“Judge, I am one of the students who participated in the suppression of the Shimabara Rebellion, the reproduction of the Far East Catholic revolt from fifty years ago that was brought forward in time. After that harsh war ended, I returned here and received a recommendation from the Testament Union. Well, they determined that leaving a young girl who liked to go wild was dangerous; so I served as an instructor here, and when my hair started to turn white your mother came.”

“That was—”

“It was thirty... five... six years ago. She came to this middle school the same year as my idiot daughter and they hit it off and got along well.”

In that case, Horizon thought, if that is where she spent her time in middle school then what came next was...

“Was her high school here or at Musashi?”

With that question, Mitsu shook her head to the side.

Then she spoke the same words which had the same meaning as the shaking of her head.

“I don’t know. —Where that child attended high school, I mean.”



“...You don’t know?”

Determining that parroting her words was meaningless, Horizon followed with another question.

“Why is it that you don’t know? Academies are all facilities which have records being archived. They are after all the cornerstones of the politics and military of each country.”

That’s true, there the corners of her mouth formed a smile.

“I’ll say it in advance, but I’m also one who wishes to know something about it. My daughter was also quite outraged. —However, at a certain time, that child unexpectedly received a single letter and disappeared without leaving a note. Then once again at a certain time, she suddenly came back.”

Breathing in, Mitsu spoke.

“—It was around eighteen or nineteen years ago. She was slightly worn out though, and surprisingly she possessed a permit directly from Mikawa’s Lord Motonobu to live on Musashi. Also, she said the following:

"In my womb is Lord Motonobu's child. I will live with an escort on-board Musashi. However, before that I will travel through the individual territories of the Far East; so please protect me."

"I determine that she was selfish."

"That's true. My daughter as well said that quite a lot to her. However, well, it seems like she reached some kind of resolution. As expected, after howling about it for three days my daughter was tired about it. Exasperated, she was forcibly dragged by her companion through a journey through the Far East. It was a forced three month march through the most important places."

That's true, it was Kimi who spoke while she embraced her body.

"However by that time, she was already pregnant with me. Foolish brother came after boarding Musashi, though."

"...If that is the case, then Toori-sama was a house warming celebration."

"...You show no mercy on those close to you."

Mitsu formed a wry smile and said this.

"Well, that's about all I can say. If my daughter will not say what they saw on the journey, then it is not for me to say. However..."

"However?"

"I don't know where she was and what she was doing during those several years she vanished. Honda and Sakai shouldn't know either, so that's why it is likely she was not in Mikawa. If anyone was to know, it would be only Lord Motonobu."

What did you say?

"What do you think about a proposition like this? How about trying to understand your own parents. I still have a long way to go. That's why, until you get at least

to my age, even if you have not discovered the answer you cannot give up. You cannot give up so reach the conclusion that losing something is saddening.”

Having that said to her, Horizon came to a self-realization. It was the fact that her mother was also certainly lost. She was an important existence to her, however she was a stranger. If she was able to understand that existence...

“People who I have not met, and also things I have not seen..... It is really possible to become able to understand these?”

“—You shouldn’t try immediately and come to a conclusion. However, the only advice I can give is to not give up. Get that? I think it would be good for you to go after that child.”

“Why do you think that?”

Ah, there Mitsu said.

“There was a theme that child was researching.”

That was...

“The resolution of the destiny of sin through the ley lines.”



“__”

At the Horizon's side, who had involuntarily lost her words, Kimi and Futayo stood up together after extracting a green spring onion.

“That’s the first time I’ve heard that? Ah, I’m also going to take this spring onion.”

“Isn’t it about time you paid some money? —However, Kimi hearing it for the first time is that kind of thing. After all, it wasn’t something to be told to someone who was not involved, right? However Horizon, Lord Motonobu turned you into the Logismo Oplo in order to influence the end of the world. Your mother was also researching the deadly sins, about the fate of karma that people cannot escape from.”

What do you say?, said Mitsu once again.

“—Don’t you agree that there is great value in understanding?”



“That is also something I’ve heard for the first time, sensei.”

Kimi heard an unforeseen voice from the back of the house.

That familiar voice was...

“Sensei?”

Judge, at the same time that her voice, Oriotorai came from the back of the house carrying paper bags filled with goods. Both Horizon and Futayo turned that direction and lastly the grandmother as well.

“Well, it was something that there was no reason to talk to you about, Makiko.”

“Grandmother, do you know our teacher?”

Along with Horizon’s tilted neck question, Oriotorai showed the palm of her hand and urged the grandmother to go on. In a responsive movement, the grandmother placed both her hands on her hips and nodded.

“Who would have thought for Makiko to become a teacher! I was in charge of her history and ritual spell instructions. Enough for her to stay here for a while. She

sure ate a lot. —So, well, I also did teach this child's former official. ...I wonder if having two outstanding talents in a row was due to the Apocalypse.”

No, no, Oriotorai smiled and puffed out her chest.

“Someone like me still has a long way to go, sensei. And there were other people who ate more than me.”

Oriotorai not referring to herself as sensei was certainly fresh. However, the grandmother and Horizon looked alternatively over there who was repeating deep nods...

“.....”

If you were to say that being silent and at a loose end was cute, then this was cute. That's why...

“Horizon, are you returning?”

“—Judge, I was able to hear a variety of important stories. Then—?”

From here on, Horizon continued her words with that.

“I think that I will look for the obscure circumstances regarding my mother. It will be good if there are still records of her residence, a grave or something like that in Musashi, however.”

That's right, Mitsu nodded.

“There are some steamed sweet jelly beans in the kitchen, so take them and go. Also, Toori is-”

“If you're talking about foolish brother, he will come later so don't worry. Foolish brother is not good with difficult talks.”

“He's been an idiot from long ago. However, that idiot became king, huh.”

Mitsu looked towards Musashi...

“—The world is also ending.”

From far away, in the direction of IZUMO, could be heard the sound of a festival orchestra arranged into house style.

Chapter 05: The Supervisor of the Hidden Room

CHAPTER 5

"The Supervisor of the Hidden Room"



Even though there is nothing wrong
Is feeling that something is wrong
From being overly self-absorbed?
Point Allocation (Outside World)

Even though there is nothing wrong

Is feeling that something is wrong

From being overly self-absorbed?

Point Allocation (Outside World)



Mitotsudaira returned home after watching Horizon and Futayo go from Musashi's outside entrance.

Because the previous days fighting in the Armada Battle had concentrated on the starboard side of the ship, her mansion, which was about four hundred square meters of the town, only had minor fire damage. Nonetheless, considering the fire threat she had, during the last two weeks the outer wall was rebuilt with stone and the roof with tiles uncommon in Europe.

...It could be said to be a new residence.

In the afternoon, towards the evening there were no signs of life at the mansion. Neither in the narrow entrance nor in the connected dining room used for guest reception, nor in the sparsely decorated living room.

The only things in that place were the persisting perfume smell from the curtains and a pale light.

“___”

There were no personal servants. The maid model automaton that had been assigned to her through Musashi's League of Knights attended to household chores during the day. Mitotsudaira's afternoon schedule included examining the income and expenditure reports from her agriculture and corporate divisions

inside Musashi, granting permissions and giving instructions and also sending her own ideas.

...There were two perfume bottles placed atop the dining room table.

The corporation owned by her had created this new product.

She knew that inside the bottles there was a cream type with the scent of flowers. This was due to her wolf sense of smell.

Mitotsudaira, while thinking about slightly weakening the smell of the flower fragrance, entered the bedroom. She hung the case of silver chains that she had taken with her to the academy on the wall and then headed to the bed.

After this was a short patrol of her small territory and work. She had to change into her street clothing equipment.

That is why she removed her shoes, detached her uniform's skirt and the sleeves of her shirt, fell onto the bed and suddenly sighed.

...What are Horizon and the others doing now?

Kimi and Futayo were with her. Given that she was going to hear the story of her mother from Kimi's grandmother, she was achieving something significant.

In the same way, ...everyone else was as well.

The Tachibana married couple desired a comeback and Mary was aiming for a fulfilling life aboard Musashi.

The rest as well, Masazumi and Tomo, Adele and Naomasa; they were all on-board Musashi currently doing repairs and reinforcing the ship and things like that. They were all doing things that were required of them. However...

“.....”

She gazed at the wall.



There were two framed documents lined up on the bedroom wall where Mitotsudaira directed her eyes.

The one on the right side was the verification of Mitotsudaira's inherited name, a parchment with the country crests of the Far East and Hexagone Française stamped on it. The words which were lined up on the page were about fulfilling her role as both the head of the Mito-Matsudaira clan as well as that of a dispatched knight of Hexagone Française.

Lined up in the same manner, on the left side was the certification verifying her affiliation with the Musashi's League of Knights. On this was also the proclamation that Mitotsudaira was welcomed into the top position of the entire federation.

“However... that was not a result of my actual ability.”

That was something from almost twelve years ago, when she had been dispatched here and obtained this certification.

“...It was because I was dispatched directly from Hexagone Française and I had inherited the name of Mito-Matsudaira that they placed a selfish girl in such a position, displaying allegiance to the Testament Union.”

In the past she had not realized this fact and had often pushed her selfishness onto the older knights. She was indignant when they did not listen, however they had soothed her as they were adults.

With the passing of time she had become one of the members of the Chancellor's Officers which moved Musashi, and actually she should have been an equal to them...

...However at Mikawa she had done it.

She appeared in the place of the confrontation to give victory to the side of the citizens as a representative of the knights' collective, and furthermore she became allied with the side to which she had conducted battle.

Since that time, there had been no notifications about the Knight Federation meetings or anything else. When she was trapped in the cargo vessel for two weeks in England, or during the Battle of the Tower of London, she had no response at all.

She understood that she was being deprived of her role.

However, because of her status, there was no possibility of her being publicly stripped of her position.

She also wanted to ask some of the other knights about the current status of the Federation. However...

“—That is almost as if I am afraid of the reaction of those who are below me, even though I am in a higher position.”

While lowering her hips onto the bed she let out a sigh.

...She understood however, she knew she should not finish her thoughts that way.

She was distancing herself from them by arbitrarily deciding that the other side was avoiding her or not taking her seriously.

Thinking about it deeply, it was the same as with the case of Mary.

She had also unintentionally started to feel down after wrongly guessing that she would be selected as Horizon's escort.

During inconvenient times like this she wanted to be alone, or if not that, then she wanted to be together with someone.

She was selfish, that was a bad habit.

However she understood quite well when it was when she had become like that.

“It was a long time ago... about the fourth year of elementary school.”

She looked outside the window. Far away, IZUMO's Kitsuki-Taisha could be seen in the sky, however...

“It was not this IZUMO... That was at Bizen IZUMO.”

Suddenly she dropped her shoulders and collapsed onto the bed.

She thought that her hair would become horribly disheveled, however it would be fine if she set it later. Anyhow, it was because she had abruptly touched a part of herself that she didn't like. Even though the incident concerning the League of Knights should not matter to her after she had decided to follow her King, once again it had come up.



She thought about sleeping for thirty minutes to refresh herself, so while looking out the window she collapsed backwards.

Her clothing was partially removed and was in a horrid state, however she thought that since she was alone it was fine.

She collapsed.

And immediately following that...

Outside the window, in the yard with the high wall, an idiot carrying a mountain of eroge was sneakily passing through.

“—!?”



Mitotsudaira lifted up the vertically-closing window at full speed and jumped out into the garden.

Looking to the right, there was an idiot who with his body drawn back in surprise, had turned one leg in her direction. Mitotsudaira faced her entire body towards there and pointed at the total idiot...

“H-Hey! What are you doing in the yard of another person’s house!?”

“Eh? W-What, Eh? Isn’t that question kind of philosophical? Umm, People are already constantly—”

She slammed the opened window down using one finger, and with that loud noise the idiot stopped his philosophizing.

Ah, the sighing Mitotsudaira bent her body and looked down on the idiot.

“...Chancellor, I will ask once more, okay? —What are you doing in the yard of another person’s house?”

“Ah? Ahh!? —I’m not doing anything in the yard, you know!? I just have business within the storehouse around the back, I do!?”

“T-There is no storehouse at the back of my place!? Look!”

Pointing her finger and looking, there the ground of the yard held a lid which was open.

“Eh? Eeeeh!? W-What is that!? Why is it that the ground at the back of my yard has a hidden door that has been opened? Is it an illusion!?”

“Are you stupid, obviously I created it of my own accord, okay?”

“It is true that is the only way that it could have happened, however when did you create it!?”

Oi oi oi, the idiot sighed and readjusted his grip on the pile of boxes at his waist.

“When this mansion was remodeled, I struck a deal with the master craftsman to work on it in exchange for fifteen married wife genre eroge. In other words, this is one of my safe houses. Thank you, master craftsman. Thank you, married wives. I’m very blessed, right!?”

Mitotsudaira opened a sign frame with a smile.

"Ah, Tomo? I think that you are currently searching for a person at the moment. I get the feeling that that person is here. Will you come?"

“Yeah, I’m coming! I’m super coming! Hey Adele, please get the dogs to go ahead!”

“Eh? I don’t understand what is going on, but everyone please go on ahead—! Hey Boss, this is an eroge box with the Chancellor’s scent so please remember it, okay?”

“Oh, we will have the remainder after you come back, right?”

Over there the situation appeared terribly chaotic; however Mary seemed to be having fun. That was nice. For a moment she hated herself for thinking that; however, right now the situation in front of her eyes took priority.

Mitotsudaira dropped her shoulders and looked at the man in front of her eyes.

“So, Chancellor, there is not something that you want to say?”

“Eh? Will you grant me forgiveness?”

Mitotsudaira thought about that question. She had already made the arrangements for the cannon priestess and the beast tamer to come. However this was a problem concerning her and him. That is why as for the meantime...

“Do you have the intention to apologize?”

“T-That is...”

The idiot shrunk his body, and after taking a position of servitude offered a pile of about ten eroge in her direction. Then he placed his hand on his cheek and in a flirtatious manner said:

“Could you forgive me with this?”



The following moment, the residents of Musashino's surface section saw a human shaped object break through the wall of Mitotsudaira's mansion and tumble onto the road. The gale that formed together with the blow made several rectangular goods fall from the sky, but the idiot used that as a distraction and attempted to crawl away. However...

“Yeah, Boss it's your debut!”

The dogs swarmed on the crawling thing, with people ignoring it after a few seconds as the situation ended.



Masazumi had that feeling as she had heard some type of noise coming from the direction of Musashino.

She was currently located on the ground.

She had descended from Musashi and headed in the direction of IZUMO's marketplace. The location was the northern side, close to Kitsuki-Taisha, the symbol of IZUMO.

In the surroundings were tall fields of greenery which were alternated with shelter-belts.

There accompanying her at her side was a broom in the sky.

"Naito, I'm sorry. Even though you were in the middle of work, I just saw you and summoned you."

"Yeah, Judge, Judge. Ga-chan said that she would work in my place, and it's better to have a member of the Chancellor's Officers as an escort. Ga-chan also said that she would do some shopping in IZUMO later, so this works out fine to meet up."

So then, the Technohexen said while doing leisurely horizontal spin on her broom:

"Seijun, isn't it about time you let me hear what you are going to do in IZUMO?"

Yeah, Masazumi responded.

"It's a top secret conference. A bit of a story came in via Neshinbara."

“Neshinbara? Bara-yan is not going, but Seijun? Is it alright for me then?”

“Yeah, if by chance anything happens, then if you're there it will be possible to escape from the scene; and in the worst case scenario, at least you can escape on your own. Also Naito, —at this top secret conference, M.H.R.R. seems to be one of the topics.”

Hearing that, Naito stopped quickly as if her broom had fallen to the ground.

“I’m however not all that knowledgeable... Did you call the others?”

“Judge, I asked Neshinbara and Futayo if they could do some shopping later at the town of IZUMO.”

While she was saying that, they entered the area of the final shelter-belt which was close to the town. In front of her eyes where the wind was flowing through the shadow of the trees were people wearing the short sleeves of summer clothing; and the noises and voices indicating the liveliness of the town could gradually be heard.

It was a different set of noises than on Musashi. Was she just accustomed to Musashi, or was it that she was still observing Musashi as special?

This area positioned on the north side consisted of the northern-side land harbor as well as many diplomatic facilities for the diplomatic ships which came from the side of the northern sea. The wooden five-story inns which were lined up creating massive rectangular shadows was something that you could not normally see on the mainland. Then...

“—They’re there, one of the conference attendees.”

At the entrance to the town there was a giant stone shrine arch which straddled the street. It seemed as if it had become a meeting spot with there being a food stall and people who were doing nothing but waiting around.

Among those people there was a tall man that had noticed them, looked their way and raised one of his hands. That person was wearing the clothing of the Far East,

but he was either following the tradition of the country or using it as a disguise. That shadow simply showed a smile full of teeth.

“It’s been a while mate, how about a glass?”

“I have no money. —That’s why I am here as an guest.”

Masazumi said the following to the other party who was bitterly smiling.

“Where is the meeting place? Trumps #9 and England’s Secretary — Ben Jonson.”

Chapter 06: The Negotiators of the Tea House

CHAPTER 6

"The Negotiators of the Tea House"



Did I do something
That warranted being told
Thank you for coming?
Point Allocation (After This)

Did I do something

That warranted being told

Thank you for coming?

Point Allocation (After This)



There was a dim location where the light shone.

It was a tea-house which had a dirt floor with wooden tables, chairs and lined-up partitions. The entrance was open and the afternoon sunlight entered into the store. The store had only just opened for the late afternoon so there were only a few people, however...

“Mate, first of all, this store is an investment of an English corporation. I promise you safety, peace and fairness on the honour of our Queen.”

“I hope it is like that.”

Johnson and Masazumi secured a seating at the second table on the left from the entrance, which was located across the aisle from the counter.

Johnson took the seat on the interior of the store. Masazumi was in front of him alongside the wall and Naito sat with half her body on the seat on the corridor side.

Johnson formed a slight smile towards Naito, who did not put down her broom but instead continued to hold it while placing her right wing on the corridor side.

“That’s a good attitude, witch.”

“Even if you flatter me I won’t be swayed; don’t forget that, okay?”

Tes, Johnson nodded, as the tea was carried over by a disembodied hand.

The person who had brought it was the Japanese-styled lady attendant figure of Walsingham. On the other side of the Japanese-styled counter Walsingham floated a fish into the air, held in place by several double-edged knives; and with her other hand encouraged them to drink.

“Please.”

The contents of the teacup, which had a picture of a dog drawn on it, was red wine. Masazumi looked at the red contents.

“An aperitif?”

“Well then let’s have a cup, mate.”

Masazumi looked at Naito. However, she had already averted her gaze and was facing towards the outside. As there was nothing to be done, Masazumi stopped after taking hold of the teacup.

“I heard that there was an important story concerning M.H.R.R.”



Masazumi formed the words while listening to the sounds of the double-sided knives of Walsingham striking a chopping board.

“I want to hear your information first.”

“Why is that, mate?”

“The contents of that one-time information is something that I will eventually know. While we are talking like this the freshness of the information you possess is falling. That’s why after you show your goods, —we will also reveal our material.”

It was equivalent exchange. She had already, after she had seen the text message that had come through the intermediary Neshinbara, created a list of several pieces of exchangeable information. That's why Masazumi called out Tsukinowa on top of her shoulder and while thinking about what she should do...

“Ma—”

Tsukinowa suddenly started to pull out a large quantity of lists which contained attack spells.

“——!”

Walsingham pulled out the cross blade of “Wars of the Roses”, which she had been using to dissect the tuna, from the beneath the counter and Johnson pulled half of his body towards the corridor side.

“Wa-Wait a minute Tsukinowa, this is not that kind of opponent! That is for friends! For use on friends!”

“Ma—?”

Tsukinowa tilted its neck and in the meantime folded up the pages of the spell sign frames to close them; meanwhile Masazumi, who had counted a number greater than triple digits, was breaking out into a cold sweat.

.....*When had Tsukinowa acquired all of those attack spells?*

It would have been something that Asama had done. Anyway Masazumi paused and corrected her posture towards Johnson.

“So, —what is your reply?”

“Just now that was a clear act of blackmail wasn't it, Lady?”

“Nope, it was just an accident, yeah.”

The one who was the most assertive was the victor. If it was the England's Fairy Queen then this sort of spontaneous situation was possibly an everyday occurrence. That's why with a tone to change the topic Masazumi asked.

"What about M.H.R.R.?"

Yeah, Johnson nodded and suddenly started speaking.

"—M.H.R.R. has prohibited Musashi from traveling above the entirety of M.H.R.R."



.....Traveling above M.H.R.R. was prohibited!?

Masazumi was unable to react to the words that she had been suddenly told.

Johnson, who was in front of her eyes, however composedly placed his elbows on the table and did not continue.

There was only one piece of information. This was that kind of secret conference. That's why he raised his hand towards Walsingham.

"Bring the next ones."

"Tes"

At that moment, pudding and something that seemed like barley tea was carried over by hand in their respective teacups.

While Masazumi looked at the green tea colored teacup with the shaking custard pudding, Naito, who was beside her, said the following with a serious tone.

".....Thinking about it I wonder if this store has anything other than teacups."

“Would a bowl have been preferable, Witch?”

.....*Was this actually some kind of harassment that they had concocted?*

While thinking that Masazumi drank the contents of the teacup, which had come with the pudding, in order to take a short rest.

It was caramel.



“.....!”

There Johnson took refuge and ducked when she reflectively spat it out.

“Nuaaaaa! I-It’s super sweet!! I thought I was going to die!!”

“Yeah I realized but didn’t say anything, was that correct? It was amusing after all.”

“Say something! Why was it filled to the brim!? I thought it was something like barley tea!”

“There’s no way there is barley tea in England, mate. You were the one who was careless.”

She thought about knocking him down but it was true that this happened due to her lack of attention. At the counter Walsingham had started to fill a large teacup with vinegar rice and was creating something like a vinegar rice topped sliced raw tuna parfait, but if possible she wanted to end this conversation before that thing was finished.

.....*Anyhow since we have gained information from the other side now it is our turn, huh.*

Masazumi, while poking the teacup with the spoon, considered the information she should use as a card for the deal.

Then after leaving a slight pause for thought...

“I’ll say this as a result of receiving your information. ——From here the flight path that Musashi is planning to take is to travel throughout the M.H.R.R. Protestant territories...”

“—Why is that?”

.....*That had come, huh.*

Johnson was not saying more than one piece of their information. However he was trying to obtain more details about the information here.

That was a good method.

That’s why Masazumi used words which indicated that a deal was necessary.

“I want to hear some kind of interesting story.”

Equivalent Exchange. Consequently, *hmm*, Johnson folded his arms and opened a sign frame. He did not strike the keyboard with his hands. Keeping his hands free, using his feet and the movement of his toes, a keyboard in his shoes served as a replacement. Masazumi thought that he was conducting permission to release information with his home country.



The English chat was in great prosperity.

Drug Poet: “Listen, mates! Musashi’s Vice President has requested from us an interesting story!! Okay, start!”

O'Malley: “Ah, well our second child is a precocious brat so in their school trip to India for their free time they decided to pay homage to an Ueno circumcision god. That was troublesome; so before they left for their trip I arranged for an executioner, a splatter type, to break in through the window during the night and make them raise a scream.”

Swimming Man: “N-no matter how you look at it that is either a painful or a pitiful story!”

Koto Mermaid: “However, men are such a pain. ... We female mermaids often climb up onto the rocks for a break or to use it as a tanning salon, like those types of scenes drawn in pictures. So the male mermaids in an attempt to get close to us try to climb up as well, however since we have no legs we use our hands and climb up the rocks, right? At that time, due to the design of our bodies, the area around the hips slams into the rocks with great force. If the waves are receding then it is fine however if they are coming in the damage is doubled. So quite often it happens that for a moment they make an incredulous face and fall back into the ocean.”

O'Malley: “Ah, so when male mermaids occasionally are seen floating and making sounds in the oceans is because of that! However when I rescued one once the way they spoke was emphasizing their femininity so I won't be saving them again. So that was because of that, hmm...”

Four Eyes: “Doesn't it seem that this is going in an undesirable direction?”



Masazumi saw Johnson close his sign window. It seemed like he had done some kind of serious discussion. Then Johnson became silent and slightly pitched his body forward.

“Let’s confirm a consensus, mate. The current state of the world ...After Musashi has come to IZUMO what action does it seem that the other countries are taking?”

“Is it okay to start a conversation about M.H.R.R.?”

Tes, with the nod of the other party Masazumi realized the intent of this conversation. He was saying they should exchange the information of Musashi and M.H.R.R. under the pretense of confirming a consensus.

The things that were to be discussed from here on were what both sides already recognized as common knowledge. It was that kind of performance.

In that case, Masazumi who thought of confirming a consensus began listing up the knowledge she had actually acquired.

.....*M.H.R.R. huh.*

Lately the contents of their classes had only been about either M.H.R.R. or Hexagone Française. With an atmosphere of showing respect to the other party, Masazumi spoke contents which could be described as standard.

“—Germany.”



So...

“The foundation of M.H.R.R. was the “Carolingian Empire” created by the Emperor Charlemagne to unify Europe, that at the time had fallen into a state of chaos after the collapse of the Roman Empire. After the death of Emperor Charlemagne that country split into the current three countries of Hexagone Française, K.P.A. Italia and M.H.R.R.”

“Tes.”

Johnson nodded and displayed a map of Europe. Displayed there were the three countries of France, Germany and Italy.

Masazumi, while looking at the map of the three countries...

“These three countries continued to conflict over rulership. The one in a superior position at the first was K.P.A. Italia who had the Pope. After all, M.H.R.R.’s Holy Roman Emperor required the approval of the divine right of Kings from the Pope to achieve the position of Emperor; and the network of the Church was required for Hexagone Française to consolidate their massive territory.”

However, Naito began to talk with that word. She, with a slightly uninterested tone of voice, continued:

“With the changing era and the country's increasing strength, M.H.R.R.’s Holy Roman Emperor became weary of having his status being influenced by a small country. After all, the individual territories which comprised the country known as M.H.R.R., in the case of the Far East the individual prefectures which were ‘countries’, were eager about becoming independent. The Emperor asserted his status as Emperor and went to subdue those individual territories; however the Pope predicted that and demanded a number of conditions regarding the authority of the recognition of the Emperor.”

But, Masazumi heard Naito saying that.

“As a result of those negotiations continuing for a long time, the individual territories obtained strength. Eventually the representatives of the individual territories became ‘Prince-Electors’ and it was decided that the Holy Roman Emperor was to be elected and decided from among these representatives of the individual territories.

The appointment of the Holy Roman Emperor as a result of elections meant that the Pope became something unnecessary. However that also meant that the Emperor had no influence or anything, right? Conversely, since becoming the Emperor they were constantly being requested to participate in other countries'

wars and became impoverished from assisting with foreign matters and their own individual territories.

That's why eventually the current situation came, with the powerful House of Habsburg inheriting the Emperor title. That is how things are now."

Yeah, Masazumi nodded and Johnson also shook his head vertically.

That is how things are.

The name M.H.R.R. was bombastic and they also had named themselves the pioneers of European history. However...

.....In reality their individual territories were in conflict, with even the position of the Emperor being used for political maneuvering.

In the present M.H.R.R., the position of the Emperor is considered to be just a symbolic one.

"Furthermore....."

Masazumi spoke.

"A religious revolution occurred within M.H.R.R. The individual territories, while still forming the country known as M.H.R.R., split into Catholic and Protestant and conflicted; with that conflict still continuing with the Thirty Years' War."

"That's right. The flow of it would be something like this."

There Naito indicated with a sign frame.

"The History of M.H.R.R."

*** Originally, after the fall of the Roman Empire, there was a large territory which was subjugated by the Emperor Charlemagne. Afterward it split into three, with one of those being M.H.R.R.**

↓

*** Beginning: Since the Emperor's authority needed the Pope's approval, the Emperor was at the service of the Pope.**

↓

*** Middle: As a result of the Emperor becoming chosen through the Prince-Electors' elections, the Emperor's authority was reduced. It became hereditary.**

↓

*** Present: Due to the religious revolution the individual territories split into Catholics and Protestants and are currently at war. The House of Habsburg inherits the position of the Emperor.**

Masazumi, with a nodding motion at what Naito had written, stuck her spoon deep into her teacup.

Taking a look, there was Walsingham placing a take-home good into a paper box. The service here was thorough; Masazumi clenched her fists inside her heart and said the following.

“—Hashiba effectively took advantage of M.H.R.R. being in such state.”

●

.....Hashiba skilfully took in the impoverished M.H.R.R.

While thinking, Masazumi lightly indicated the eastern side of M.H.R.R. that Johnson was displaying with the front of her spoon. Then she slowly moved the tip of the spoon south to K.P.A. Italia.

“First, Hashiba of M.H.R.R. joined together with the Catholics inside the country and began preparations to invade K.P.A. Italia. Originally the person who was meant to consolidate the country’s Catholics was the Holy Roman Emperor and Chancellor Rudolf II; however...”

Moving her gaze briefly to the neighboring Naito, who shook her head vertically, she continued:

“Rudolf II “Wahnsinniger” is currently being imprisoned by his younger brother, the Student Council President Matthias; and it is Matthias who holds the actual authority of M.H.R.R. Well, Rudolf II rather than politics had a trend towards Technomagi and those kinds of suspicious formulas, so there really was nothing to be done though.”

In front of her eyes Johnson nodded with a peaceful face.

“—It’s as you say, mate.”

Johnson nodded.

“M.H.R.R. is being controlled by Hashiba and the Emperor’s younger brother Matthias.”



Drug Poet: “Well then everyone, the conference has continued wonderfully up to now! This is no doubt a result of my skill as a secretary...! Come now; please let me hear your praise mates! Praise please!!”

Queen: “You guys have been boisterous for a while now. Calm down.”

Swimming Man: “.....”

Koto Mermaid: “.....”

O'Malley: “.....”

Seal Boy: “.....”

Queen: “Okay, so Johnson what are you doing? —Have you written a reply to celebrate Golden-Tama Jr. who was born the other day?”

Drug Poet: “No, that is...”



Masazumi did not overlook that Johnson’s expression had become slightly sterner as he looked at his sign frame.

It was because from here on they would be talking about matters beyond the consensus. However nothing would begin if she was afraid.

Masazumi, after taking a fleeting glance towards Naito, turned to Johnson and spoke.

“It is a certainty that Hashiba has taken control of M.H.R.R.”

However...

“I am thinking that the reason both of them agreed to that was not just due to the circumstances of Europe.”

“What exactly do you mean by that, Lady?”

Judge, there Masazumi nodded and indicated beneath her feet with her spoon.

“The circumstances of the Far East side.”

Beneath her feet was IZUMO and below that was...

“It is not only Hexagone Française which is in Europe. There is also simultaneously the Mouri clan which represents their Far East side.”

Then Masazumi once again indicated the map of Europe within Johnson’s sign frame with her spoon.

“Do you understand?”

She spoke.

“Thanks to the history recreation of the Far East side, Hashiba, who are in Kinki, can advance their army into the Chūgoku region. Their objective is the subjugation of the western side of the country and in the first place to crush the Mouri clan. Consequently, that the P.A. Oda Ottomans' Hashiba will invade thanks to the historical recreation of the Far East side is something that M.H.R.R. cannot avoid; so it is a thing that the Tsirhc countries of the Testament Union are also wary of. That’s why using that, Hashiba started giving support to the remnants of the Amako as an opportunity——”

That’s why...

“—The Student Council President of M.H.R.R. Matthias devised a plan. If Hashiba was converted from the Mlasi doctrine to Catholicism and formed an alliance with him, then they could be appended into the organization of M.H.R.R.”

In other words that was...

“They could bring in Hashiba not as an enemy but as an ally of the Catholics and the Emperor.”



It was approximately two years ago when Hashiba completely joined together with M.H.R.R.

It was a proposal from M.H.R.R., and that Hashiba accepted that request became a huge incident.

.....That M.H.R.R.'s Catholics converted those Ottoman forces was something that would often cause a fuss for several days in the daily tile-block newspapers.

There was no one that simply could accept that truth.

However, due to the reality and achievements that happened, the Tsirhc-based countries had no choice but to accept that the weakened M.H.R.R. had gained a vast power backer in P.A. Oda; including the fact that Hashiba, with its connections to the Ottomans, had already embarked into Europe.

M.H.R.R. as well did not know when Hashiba would decide to reinstate their Ottoman side from P.A. Oda and overthrow M.H.R.R. in one go. Depending on the situation...

.....It would become one where Hashiba would take over the governance of M.H.R.R.

The point of contact for that deal was the Holy Roman Emperor's younger brother Matthias.

"At the moment it could be said that Matthias is winning his bet. Naturally Hashiba also inherited the name of the House of Habsburg which governed the territory of Austria where Rudolf II and Matthias were bornOn the side of the Far East, the Himeji Castle of Harima capitulated without any fighting thanks to Hashiba."

That's why she understood why Musashi was being prohibited from traveling in the sky of all the territory of M.H.R.R.

.....It was that M.H.R.R. did not wish to increase the number of problems within their country.

Musashi was unable to form an alliance with England. However they were able to obtain their cooperation and friendship.

England was a Protestant country. If Musashi which had gained that cooperation and provisions was to head towards M.H.R.R., then obviously the destinations would be focused around the Protestant territories; and Masazumi had indeed decided to move in such a manner.

The M.H.R.R. Protestant territories were concentrated in the northern region. If Musashi was to cooperate with the Protestants then Hashiba, who were presently preparing to invade K.P.A Italia at the Seto Inland Sea to the south, would have a dangerous situation at their rear.

.....*That's why,they had prohibited Musashi's travel, huh.*

She could not speak of it as a consequence of it being top secret information. However, Masazumi...

Vice President: "Neshinbara, could you please send me information that only pertains to recent changes in the circumstances of M.H.R.R.?"

In order to gain information she sent words to her comrades. However...

"?"

There was no reply.



.....Eh?

Even waiting for a few seconds there was no reply in the chat from Neshinbara's "Novice". Before anything could be said about that situation, Naito acted.

"Yeah."

She slightly embraced her broom.

With only that little of an action Masazumi comprehended the situation.

.....This was an atmosphere that there was something to be wary of.

Something was happening.

However, Masazumi thought that Naito was with her.

She was one of the prominent escorts of the Far East. Beside her was a rare level of Technohexen even throughout the entire world. In that case Masazumi believed in the fact that she could manage even if anything occurred. That's why she readjusted her seating.

"What is the matter, mate?"

Masazumi looked at Johnson's questioning face.

Realising that the corner of his mouth were slightly upraised Masazumi comprehended the meaning of this conference.

"Johnson."

Masazumi while being self-aware that her eyebrows were slightly raised asked a question.

".....M.H.R.R. has prohibited the passage of Musashi over its territory. I understand the meaning behind those words. However is it all right to ask a single question?"

"What is it, mate?"

She had obtained permission. That's why she asked:

“.....That information. Why was England able to learn that information concerning M.H.R.R.?”

In the face of that question, Johnson deepened his smile and nodded with a "Tes."

“It seems that the preparations to confirm the real consensus have been finally completed, Lady.”

“.....What do you mean?”

Do not you get it?, Johnson tilted his head.

“—It's something you'll understand immediately. Look.”

A wind arrived together with those words. It was not the warm wind of the afternoon. It was a typhoon. Turning around and looking, there the wind which ran thought the street was a single shadow which jumped into the road in front of the store.

That shadow which she saw had rotated once through the air and while falling to the ground carried out control of its stance.

“—Futayo!?”



A solitary movement occurred within the bridge of Musahino.

It was Suzu. She who had been reclining on her chair as if she was sleeping suddenly raised her body. With that movement “Musashino” nodded.

“.....I have been hearing a strange noise coming from IZUMO's northern market area from earlier. —Over”

“J-judge, There’s a-also that, umm.”

Suzu stood up and with hesitating movements made her hands dance. That direction was at first east, then south, east and circled around to the north.

“U-umm”

Suzu spoke with a troubled expression.

“What are we going to do.....”

Chapter 07: The Gusting Individuals of the Neutral Zone

CHAPTER 7

"The Gusting Individuals of the Neutral Zone"



That was a vague thing
That went through the air
Point Allocation (Approaching)

That was a vague thing

That went through the air

Point Allocation (Approaching)



Masazumi, who had come out from inside the tea-house together with Naito, saw Futayo.

Futayo took a low landing stance after completing a backwards somersault on top of the road kicking up dust. However, after having landed on the ground several meters to their rear, she paid no attention to them and was instead looking in a slightly upraised direction.

In the busy street, people were currently raising voices of surprise in front of where her eyes hurried to.

...That is natural.

Masazumi thought. That was a neutral zone, a location where acts of aggression were prohibited. However Futayo had already drawn Tonbokiri and at the end of where her eyes were looking...

“An enemy?”

...was there.

On the rooftop of the aligned buildings that formed the street there was a single pair, composed of a man and woman, on the top of a three-story restaurant.

The distance was approximately thirty meters. What was there were figures clad with Qing-Takeda school uniforms.

Out of the group of two one was a woman with white hair and skin, while in contrast the other was a dark-skinned man.

Both wore their school uniforms sloppily. The woman let her hair be blown by the wind while the man lowered his body like a monkey, but both of them were looking towards Futayo.

Facing Masazumi's gaze, the man smiled and said, surprised:

“Who would have said you'd be able to defend from our first attack.”

The woman also spoke smiling:

“It was nothing more than a simple first attack.”

“As expected of Musashi's Vice-Chancellor, trying to say something like that.”

“Why is it that you pass off to me the task of praising the enemy. It was a surprise attack and its force was no different from a normal attack, it was not anything special. For both you and me that attack was the same as always. That's why—”

“Yeah.”

The man who remained crouched at the edge of the roof tilted his body. With a movement that could be described as more like dropping rather than falling he still remained looking at Futayo.

“The same as always.”

The next moment Masazumi saw wind in front of her eyes. The one who had coiled up the cloud of dust like a fluttering sheet was...

“I'm sorry for the tardy introduction. I am — Unneeded #1. She is #2.”

The next thing she knew was that the enemy suddenly appeared in front of her eyes. It was the man who just now should have been falling from the distant roof.

...*Huh!?*

The distance from the roof to here was approximately thirty meters. Since the man was looking at Futayo she had been caught off guard.

A single strike came from the man who had named himself. Masazumi did not move when the single strike from the thick blade was released from behind his waist.

“.....e!”



The sound resonating in Masazumi's ears was a metallic clang.

What her eyes saw was the colors of gold and black.

Furthermore, a voice reached her.

“That was dangerous.”

“That was close.”

In the space between herself and the enemy there was a fully open set of six wings and black hair.

They were Naito and Futayo.



Naito felt a sense of amazement inside herself at her situation being located between Futayo and Masazumi.

.....*Wow*—.

There was no time to bring out Schwarz Fräulein. That's why she had used her broom's refreshed deployment defense spells as a shield and attempted to receive the enemy attack using that. However, faster than that Futayo had...

.....Gone and cut it in front of her.

Before Naito could think of the meaning of the words "Vice Chancellor" the wind occurred once again in front of her eyes.

The stirred up cloud of dust ascended above the road and in an instant the enemy was about twenty meters on the far side. They moved to the rooftop of one of the houses along the street. Then the two, the white woman and the dark man, landed with light steps on the rooftop.

It was Naito's impression that they were calm.

Meanwhile, in front of her eyes Futayo adjusted the readied Tonbokiri back to her side.

"Naito, please take Masazumi and distance yourself from here."

Futayo spoke without turning around.

"The job of an escort is to distance the subject from any danger. —I will take charge of this area. You take Masazumi and distance yourselves from here."

Will you be alright? She tried to say that, but stopped. Futayo held a higher official position than her, so worrying about her would achieve nothing. What she should be saying was...

"Make sure that you don't overdo it okay? You seem a bit irritated."

"Do I look like that?"

"Judge. —After all, your horns are already raised to the first level. Did something happen?"

Judge, Futayo nodded. She pulled out a small brochure from her skirt.

“I thought about eating a lot at the recently rumored cream puff store here in IZUMO.”

“Ah, the store that followed the way of tea, the ‘Way of Cream.’ I do think they should do something about their name though.”

“.....However when I went there a previous customer had bought out all the stock. While I was experiencing a bout of anger I suddenly was under attack.” “

Oh? The woman on top of the roof, Unneeded #2, tilted her head. She pulled a paper bag from under her arm and from the inside took out a large amount of cream puffs.

“You mean these? I got full of myself and ended up buying about twenty of them.”

Naito saw Futayo’s horn shaped hair clip rise up to the second level. While thinking that this was not good she also thought that it would be fine since this would not mean any harm to her. Consequently, she said:

“—I’ll leave it to you.”

“.....Judge!”

That was when Futayo leaped forward.

There was a single shadow passing above her head. The one who was leaping by twisting his body and adjusting his stance at a high position was...

“—Bara-yan!?”

It was Neshinbara.



Neshinbara was in the middle of combat.

The circumstances that led to the battle were simple.

.....While he was walking the street reading the book that he had bought someone had suddenly gone to punch him.

He had thought that it was a dangerous incident; however, that the power was strong enough to easily destroy a bench which was located at the side of the road was troublesome. The opponents were a group of two, and one of them was at that precise moment saying...

“—Come on!!”

With a sharp enthusiastic shout they leaped and pursued after him who was in the air.

It was a woman. She was wearing a plumed female Far Eastern school uniform with the belly exposed, like a dancing girl.

She leaped into a high position. When Neshinbara saw that he noticed it was not a spell but martial arts.

“Unneeded #7,on my way!”

Smiling eyes donned in heavy makeup stared his way and she waved the weapon she was carrying.

.....An iron-ribbed war fan!

A massive iron-ribbed war fan with fur attached, where every spoke could be used as a blade. The woman gripped the side handle at the base to make it easier to swing around.

“.....Okay, come on!!”

She deployed the folding fan like a blossoming flower and the blades were sequentially thrust forward.

“How persistent...!!”

<<The wind blew and his body fell down as if it had tripped.>>

His trajectory in the air dropped down by one step.

The blade passed over his head and because she feared a counterattack the woman spun her body around above the circular expanding blade.

But Neshinbara did nothing against the enemy above his head because...

.....It was necessary to gain an understanding of the current situation.....!

On the street that he was passing over, beneath his eyes there was Futayo who was also fighting with a group of two. He assumed them to be enemies so Naito and Masazumi were moving to take cover in a nearby tea-house. Furthermore on top of the opposite rooftop where he and the #7 woman were leaping to was...

“The second person from those who suddenly punched me earlier...!”

“I am the Unneeded #3.....!”

That one, who was wearing a Far East uniform remodeled into the appearance of a monk, was a middle-aged demonic long-lived.

He had a large physique, one with a height over four meters that rivaled that of the giants. However his body was only slightly bending to the opposing rooftop of the house he was using as a platform.


“Now...!”

The demonic monk #3 took a high leap which passed over the street at the same time he thrust out his right arm.


But there was a distance of about ten meters between them. While #3 had a large physique and a giant leap it still was a distance that his fist could not reach.

However #3 twisted his reddish brown arm and let out a shout.


“Sermon Cannon!!”




Unneeded #2



Unneeded #1



Unneeded #3



Unneeded #7

The characters and tattoos that were engraved in his great arm changed positions and design with the rotation of the arm. In an instant, a Homa [\[2\]](#) ritual rank type crest appeared as if to surround the arm. On the palm ether letters forming “Scold” appeared.

...Seriously!?

Neshinbara understood. The woman, #7, who had extended her fan above in the sky had not positioned herself above the fan shield as a forecast of his attack...

It was in order to not receive the aftershock from this monk’s attack.

The cannon was fired.

“Scold...!!”



Due to the cannon blast the air was split across tens of meters by the occurrence of an explosion that could be described as bright.

In response to the expanding atmospheric wave the woman #7 asked:

“Did you get him!?”

Standing on top of the iron-ribbed war fan she went as if stepping forward and completed an upside-down 180° flip. However...

<<His body fell in a straight line.>>

Her target was about to fall on his backside onto the second story thatched roof.

<<Right before he impacted, he rolled up his body and regained his posture.>>

<<It was a rushed movement. However—.>>

<<He made it in time—.>>

“Wow, how unfair! That’s cheating, you aspiring author. You fell on your backside you know!?”

The prey yelled back towards the words of #7, who had closed her folding fan and landed two roofs to the side.

“Please, won’t you say that my hands are fast? In the first place, why did you suddenly start attacking me?”

After those words the demonic monk who had descended next to #7 yelled. He pointed to his target and said:

“It is necessary to beat your immoral spirit back to normal!”

“What do you mean immoral?”

“Then, what is that book that you are holding in your hand—!?”



This? Neshinbara raised the book he had bought from the bookstore and was still holding.

“It’s only an ordinary novel, right? It’s a modern arrangement of the Tale of the Heike - Awakening version. There’s a bit of ‘the wildness of my right arm, it is truly terrifying’ and ‘Melt, drain them my Kusanagi-no-Tsurugi’ however the contents are exceedingly normal, okay?”

“Normal? Is it normal for a light novel to have its characters have names with ‘Dark’, ‘Kill’, ‘King’ or ‘Rome’ in them, you fool!! And what is up with walking on the street reading something with special attack names such as ‘Prison’, ‘Temple’ or ‘Impact’ while saying ‘Ah, there’s no nipple ticket this time’!? In the first place what is up with talking about nipple tickets, something

which is nothing more than an urban legend, with such a self-satisfied expression!”

Four Eyes: “.....What? You’re still reading those type of embarrassing stories? It couldn’t be that you are writing them as well, right?”

“B-Be quiet, don’t interfere. Well, you see—”

Neshinbara pointed in the demonic monk's direction. While thinking that it was a pain, he explained:

“—I’m sorry that I really like things such as ‘Ogre Slayer’ and the ‘Three Sacred Treasures’! However, in any case you probably read things like ‘A composed famous work about the exclusive thoughts of teenagers’ or ‘Why is it that I can’t reach an equal understanding of others, I wonder’ and then say shameless things like ‘We’re sensitive existences that damage each other’ right!? You’ve created those sorts of poems, haven’t you!?”

“Huh!? Is there anything wrong with that—?”

“T-there’s an embarrassing old guy who became really serious here!!”

"There is nothing wrong with that!" yelled the demonic monk into the sky, clenching his fist.

“In Man'yō poetry, the maiden stricken with love goes near the mansion of someone outside of her reach with a tear-stained face! How pitiful and fleeting! What can you say about that in one word!?”

“No matter how you think about it, that’s a stalker.”

As soon as he said that, the Sermon Cannon attack was launched.

“Wah!”

He hurriedly avoided it, but the approaching ether ordnance was not just one shot. Apart from the right arm cannon, the left arm of the demonic monk was twisted

as if it was being pulled and there, entwining it, a large rosary type ether crest assembled. That was...

“.....A rosary type ether charger!?”

“You not understanding it is because you are a slow commander who lacks imagination...”

A series of scold shots came at an overwhelming density.

Falling back or going left or right wouldn't make it. If it was possible...

<<That body rode the wind and leaped.>>

He leaped straight up, and a great leap was added to it; enough to send someone flying. With that movement Neshinbara danced his body into the air, however...

“—The imagination of an aspiring author is only this?”

#7 came from an even greater height than him.

.....*Damn!*

She had used the cannon blast as a distraction. Also, she had kicked off of the back of the demonic monk and from his shadow leapt overhead, where she was already preparing to use her iron-ribbed war fan.

“I'll take the first credit...”



Futayo was conducting a battle with the enemy pair.

At her rear, Naito had already retreated inside the teashop together with Masazumi. That was a decision made due to the fact that immediately fleeing

away was dangerous since the enemy's movements were clearly not those of a coincidental battle; and they had also the fear of snipers being positioned.

If anything was to happen they could always take off from the rear entrance. However, everything...

“Depends on my actions!”

The enemy was currently flying throughout the town.

They were not jumping. They were riding the wind, in the street, on rooftops and then freely moving through the sky.

It was the wind.

When she thought that they were going to charge, they then instantly circled around to the rear of the teashop and completed several turns like that. There was no stagnation in their comings and goings, but they occasionally showed a shaking like bend the same as the wind.

That movement was not only horizontal, it was also from above and from below as if to gouge it on the opposite side.

That's why Futayo ran lengthwise and crosswise through the town.

The repairs to the half-broken Tonbokiri from her battle with Gin during the Armada Battle were still not complete. The expansion and contraction went to the third stage, so when it was fully expanded the length was halved.

However, tight turns were effective. In particular, repetitive short jumps through the usage of the expansion structure were possible.

“...!”

Futayo ran up the wall, ran swiftly around the roof, stepped on the eaves and jumped to higher roofs and to those on the far side of the street. The speed, which could be said to be perpetual motion, was thanks to using Tonbokiri as a balance stabilizer allowing her to perpendicularly climb up walls and run horizontally.

That was what she wanted.

Following the gusting enemy, both sides were taking a roundabout path through the air. However the #1 man who attacked with a short sword and the #2 woman were both aiming for her rear. That movement was...

.....*Not the actions of a swordsman!*

Samurai type strike-forcers versed in the arts of swordsmanship were in the habit of dealing with their enemies in head-on. Swordsmanship in itself had crossing swords with the enemy from the front as a given.

However these opponents were different. Taking the initiative and aiming for the back was...

.....A technique used for assassination.

In that case, these opponents were...

“Ninja!?”



Futayo realized that there was no reply to her question.

All she had was the fact that she was running on the top of a three-story building chasing the enemy, and that the #2 woman turned her way and for a moment formed a smile.

That smile was completely fixated on her face...

.....*They are coming.....!*

When Futayo thought that, the smile of #2 was completed.

“Go!”

The woman's hand struck the back of #1.

When she heard the thick noise which was more like flesh than clothing, the figure of #1 had vanished.

She understood that he was riding on the wind. It was something that had previously happened several times. However this time was different. Up until now the two of them had been moving together; however...

.....A pincer attack from the front and rear!?

As if to confirm that she was correct, a presence appeared from her rear.

The rear was dangerous; #1 was attempting to circle around it. However...

“How about this?”

#2 grasped a large number of knives from the bag that she was holding under her arm.

At the same time the presence of #1 was moving at her back.

The knives were thrown. They were not thrown to pierce the opponent, as they were scattered and thrown on a trajectory to stop her movements. Even if she went to repel them, as the knives were not aimed for her it was hard to read their trajectory.

As a judgment against the enemy in her front and rear and the group of knives...

“.....e!”

Futayo took a turn from her pursuit. She leaped to the left at a right angle.

It was an action to slip away from the knives and to escape from the pincer. However...

.....They are continuing to follow!?

With his footsteps circling around to her rear, #1 rotated his body once and appended his trajectory. That was almost as if he was aiming for a back-to-back situation.

It was a position where she could not attack; however, without any unnecessary movements #1 went to stab her left flank with the short dagger he carried doing a backhand grip in his right hand.

She could not move left. Consequently, in an instant decision Futayo tucked Tonbokiri by her right flank and from the center instantly made it expand to the front and rear at the same time.

“Go!!”

“Understood—”

Both forward and backward. The butt-end went towards #1 at the left rear. The tip was shot towards #2 at the front right.

It was released.

In response, a movement from the left rear came first. As #1 was very close, he abandoned his short sword and then made his lightened body spin to open up some distance.

Accompanying those movements, which also raised loud footsteps, was a voice containing a smile.

“That was dangerous...!!”

However Futayo had a strange feeling towards #1, who had accurately taken a distance against the lengthened butt-end.

...What that just now!?

Futayo had an unusual feeling regarding the enemy.

No, this unusual feeling was not just from this instant but something she had felt from #1 for the past few moments. There was something different from him whom she had faced up till now and the current him.

However before she could recognize what that was, at the front right...

“...Ugh,”

The tip of Tonbokiri pierced through the chest of #2.

The action required to throw the knives had created an opportunity.

As if to gouge through the right of her chest the point of Tonbokiri made a direct hit.

It ran her through.

At the same time the voice of #1 that contained a hint of surprise reached her.

“#2.....!!”

She had certainly killed Number Two.



“You bitch...!”

Futayo heard the voice of #1 from her back.

In her hand she had a slightly hard but nevertheless light reaction coming from #2.

Then at the same moment that #2 who had received the spear tip to her chest fell forward, the voice of #1 resonated as if to erase all noise. The sound of footsteps stepping on the roof echoed loudly from the rear.

“Damm you...”

He's coming, Futayo thought. #2 was dead. That's why #1 was next.

To achieve that she either had to turn around, retract the butt-side and intercept him or start an evasive movement. However...

.....*What is this?*

Futayo felt a doubt about the strange feeling towards #1 from before.

Something was odd. That thought changed into confirmation with every action that #1 took. There was a slight but also clear difference between him from the moment of contact up to now and the current him.

.....*This is odd!*

She did not know what it was, but there was definitely something. It was dangerous to start a fight with #1 without knowing what that was. That's why Futayo reached one conclusion...

“—I'll face you at another time.”

Without turning around to #1, who was at her rear, she leaped forward.

She ran away.



As if to pierce through and blow away #2, Futayo took a large leap to the front right.

In an instant, she had opened up a distance with #1.

While she stepped on the creaking roof, footsteps clearly rang out as well.

.....*This is—*

Futayo realized the source of the strange feeling. However at that exact same time, something moved.

It was #2.

She who had been pierced by the tip of the spear and stopped moving, suddenly said this:

“I’ve been exposed.”

She was not dead. The body of #2 jumped up together with those words.

She was alive.

The movements of her body, however, did not stop there.

.....*What!?*

That was not a human.

From the area pierced by Tonbokiri, the woman changed the shape of her entire body as if it was swirling water, distorting herself.

“Oh!”

Looking like something similar to a half destroyed bag or spreading smoke, and finally like a spider trying to catch its prey, she changed her shape. However, there still remained the indefinite form of a person.

“...Here I go...!”

The entire body of #2, with movements that almost seemed like a massive hand expanding and shrinking, attacked her.

What was the reason for these movements? Futayo furrowed her brow and reached a conclusion.

“A monster!”



Futayo saw it. From beyond #2, who had changed into a wind monster and was trying to encircle her, there was something that Tonbokiri's tip was thrusting.

What the tip of the white edge was thrusting was a single knife.

It was the same as one of those which previously had been thrown her way. She now understood the meaning for it being at #2's back.

.....It was in order to provide a fake sense of reaction!

This woman was some kind of monster related to the wind. She had no weight and blades had no effect. However, the basis of her power was to lift and transport things, so it was likely that she was primarily the assistant of #1.

Futayo finally understood. The cause of the strange feeling that she had about #1 was the occurrence of footsteps. The footsteps, not present at all since he first emerged, suddenly appeared when the two of them had separated to the front and rear. However in order to disguise the fact that the woman who was made of the wind had no footsteps #1 had purposely created loud footsteps while moving.

Spreading out the knives was to create a false reaction and #1 yelling out at the time the woman was stabbed by the tip of the spear was also in order to disguise that there was no piercing sound.

Creating the delusion that #2 was dead and then, when she turned around to face #1, #2 would quietly attack from behind.

It was that kind of process.

However, since Futayo hesitated she was not caught. If you are hesitating then move forward...

.....*Yes, that is something that my father taught me.....!*

Futayo thought about the past.

Often, when Kazuno had approached her father with a scolding presence he had quickly retreated backwards.

That was because “I have no doubt! Since I have no doubt it is fine to fall back!”, but then a serious-faced Kazuno simply increased her speed so there was really not much meaning there.

Even so, Futayo considered how to deal with the enemy.

The enemy was a wind-like being, so it had no vital points. Since stabbing with a blade did not work then the effect of Tonbokiri’s slicing ability probably also would be weak.

However, her moving forward was a blunder. It was a mistake.

.....*What have I done!*

At this rate, if she moved forward and was enveloped by the wind it was likely that she would be blown away. With the instantaneous speed of the enemy’s technique and its momentum she could expect to be slammed into the ground or somewhere else.

She wanted to avoid that.

“In that case.”

Futayo moved her left hand around her back and waved it.

What she grasped with her fingers was the short dagger that #1 had just now released to lighten his body. With her fingers Futayo grasped the blade of the dagger that seemed as if it had fallen onto the roof, and while slightly shaving away her skin threw it at #2.

#2, the opponent that the heavy armor-piercing dagger was flying at, was wind.

Blades have no effect on the wind. But there was a place where it made sense to attack.

“The face!!”



In front of Futayo's vision the appearance of #2 was constantly changing as if dissolving.

However she could see the modeling of the face. In that case...

.....Whether it is a monster or something else, if she has a face then her sensory organs should be concentrated there!

It was the same as for the black algae and spirits. That's why if she aimed at the face, even if it did not stab, the shadow of the blade would take away the opponent's vision. Sure enough, against Futayo's thrown dagger...

“...!?”

A minor disturbance occurred in the movements of #2. It was just for a moment, but Futayo did not overlook it. She lowered her body, ran swiftly and swung her body to the side.

To avoid attack of the wind, she passed through the side.

However #1 pursued her from the rear. The footsteps were softer than before, almost as if they were fading away.

The pursuing footsteps from the rear grabbed hold of a knife from the space of #2. It was the hidden knife that #2 had used to create the artificial reaction when she was pierced by the tip of the spear.

That was the moment when Futayo heard the sound of #1 taking it in his hand. Futayo took action.

“.....!”

Futayo judged that there was an opportunity.

At the moment when the knife was grabbed the top half of his body became exposed. That's why when Futayo had spun half her body around she extended Tonbokiri.

“Go!”

She drove the tip of Tonbokiri into #1 who was at the time between her and #2. That was what should have happened, but what Futayo first saw in her gaze when she half-turned around was the afternoon sky and the thatched roof.

Neither #1 nor #2 were there.

The only thing she had at her back was something that sounded like footsteps when falling. That was...

.....*Shoes!?*

The thing she had heard as footsteps was the sound of shoes being taken off and dropped.

The enemy was not at her rear.

By the use of a body replacement technique they had disguised their location. Furthermore, #1 together with #2 was concealing his footsteps with the wind and moving somewhere.

.....*That was a wonderful swift change of pace!*

Then, what was going to come was...

“—The rear!”

With the movement of her arm and without any confirmation, she swung and drove the tip of the spear to her back. The response was...

“.....Got it!!”

Piercing through someone and going through bone, there was also the limpness of flesh reactionary stiffening. Futayo, who rotated her body as if following the handle, turned around and examined the tip.

She was mistaken. The object the that tip was piercing was not #1.

“A tree branch!?”

The thin tree branch was bonded with a talisman and the spear was piercing through the center of that.

This time, it was a real body replacement technique.

.....*This is ninja technique!!*

When she thought that, the wind came from behind.

Tonbokiri was still extended with its tip stabbed into a talisman which contained the same weight of a person.

She had no method to attack. That is why Futayo...

“__“

She took action.

Futayo let go of Tonbokiri and fell backwards into the wind which was approaching from the rear.



“!?”

Both #1 and #2 were taken aback by Futayo's abrupt movement.

After all the target had itself jumped towards them at the moment of the attack.

#1, who had lost his timing, gained a deep smile on his cheeks.

.....*Now you've done it!*

Pursuing and attacking from behind was the basis of being a ninja, so they were taken aback with the actions of the enemy who had fallen backwards towards them. He could not deny that he had the thought that their opponent was a samurai.

Damn, while he was smiling towards his chest...

“.....e”

The black hair waved, it lightly danced.

Futayo's back went as if to touch his chest.

At the moment when she thought they were going to make contact as if they were embracing, #2, who was enveloping her, suddenly moved. She blew her away to the side.

“Noo—”



Futayo realized that the two at her rear had split to the left and right. It was after the words of #2, that she did not understand the meaning of.

Immediately following that, Futayo raised her right leg. She placed her leg on the grip of the Tonbokiri which was released into the air.

“Bind, Tonbokiri!”

The branch at the tip split into two and scattered through the air. Then pulling her knee to her chest Tonbokiri flew horizontally with good momentum.

“...!”

Towards her who was stepping backwards, #1 was trying to pass by her side. He stopped his body to pass under Tonbokiri while #2 joined with the wind and went over Tonbokiri.

She saw the enemy.

At that time she could feel the enemy forward at the right and left. She could also determine their position above and below.

There was a chance of winning.

However Futayo saw the strong gaze that #1 and #2 had displayed to her when they had passed by.

They still had some sort of plan left. It was that kind of gaze.

At that time, Futayo had an involuntary reaction.

At the edge of her mouth the looseness of an arc was born.

.....*This is amazing.*



Futayo thought that even no mattering how one looked at this, in her inexperience

she was just dodging and struggling desperately; but the enemy conveyed with their gaze that it was still going to continue.

How admirable.

She had gained knowledge about ninjas from Kazuno and conducted anti-shuriken training and things like that, but this was the first time she had dealt with them at this level in an actual battle. The earlier body replacement technique was something she had only seen in the anime “Underpopulated Ninja Tottori” and she thought that the real technique was amazing.

If she was able to nullify all of the opponents' attacks then would it be okay to say that she was at the same level as these people?

.....No.

The enemy's attacks were something that had been created through years of training; she was just taking advantage of that.

She understood very well that between creating and using, the latter was overwhelmingly easy. In that case, even if she were to win against these opponents she would she not be equal to them.

...That's why it was interesting.

Futayo took Tonbokiri in her hand and after lowering and compressing her body she leaped backwards.

She did it into the sky which spanned above the street. As expected the two enemies once again overlapped their bodies and pursued her.

“—!”

A metallic sound loudly rang out.



At the same time the sound of ringing metal echoed, there was something that Neshinbara realized first. It was the softness of the hand lightly pressing his chest.

Following that, what he saw was a slightly dark-skinned, dark-haired head with horns; and at the waist and shoulder were carried...

.....A demonic woman with four swords!?

The female demonic warrior leaped towards #7 while keeping her eyes closed.

Her clothing was a white Far Eastern school uniform entwined with some decorative fabric.

The blades drawn in an intersecting trajectory were the two katana at her waist.

In an instant she drew what could be called a long sword. It was a katana in which the blade length alone was a meter and a half.

Almost at the same time, the two katana that were raised overheard as if they were being extended, intercepted the iron-ribbed war fan of #7 which was falling from the sky.

Sparks scattered.

“.....Damn!”

Through the expanding movements of the demonic woman's intersecting two swords the iron-ribbed war fan was blown away. #7 clicked her tongue in the sky.

“How troublesome—”

Those words did not continue. That was because in the air the demon woman, who had reached the peak of her leap, launched a second attack.

...Eh?

Neshinbara who had been blown away by her observed her movements while landing on a faraway rooftop.

However, he was unable to comprehend.

That was because at first the woman released her hands from the upraised swords that were raised up as if intersecting, then drew the two katana at her shoulders, and then drove the previous two katana into the empty shoulder sheaths.

“You think you can get away, scum!”

While keeping her eyes closed the downward swing of the two katana easily shattered the fan-swords which were expanded into the sky as a shield.

“Ugh!”

The two katana swung straight down cut off the left and right of the shield that was deployed as an arc. On the far side #7, who was in the trajectory of the katana, raised her eyebrows and kicked the wreckage of the iron-ribbed fan towards the demonic woman.

It would hit. But right before that the woman released her hands from her two katana. Almost as if spilling from her palms, the katana revolved and fell in the empty sheaths at her waist and at that time the two katana from her shoulder were already being swung down.

The attack, which entered a downward arc, cut apart the kicked iron-ribbed fan and sent it towards the demon monk below.

“Well then. —Finally one down.”

.....*This was unreasonable!*

Neshinbara opened his mouth and looked at the woman who had launched off the consecutive attacks, wondering why it was that all the women who appeared in front of him were a bunch of Spartans.

However, while she was still forming a silver arc using a katana and directing that power directly towards the enemy...

“—Wait!!”

Something arrived together with a voice transmitted from an audio device.

It was a God of War.



The thing that suddenly appeared on the street at Neshinbara's back arrived with a large amount of wind and the sound of metal parts colliding.

There, standing in the center of the earth tremor and roar which accompanied the dust cloud was a single blue god of war.

It was a female model with a flying unit. The head had armor modeled after the face of a dog and at the tip of the single sword which was trusted out with the right arm...

“If the enemy of my enemy is my friend, —both of you would be my opponent, then?”

The white clothed demonic woman remained standing in a stance with all four of her blades sheathed.

However, the god of war, while still creating a haze from the flight unit, stopped its movements.

Neshinbara knew this god of war. No...

.....That demonic woman as well. As well as those people who had attacked them.

The thought in his mind was that it couldn't be, but with so many gathered he was sure of it.

.....*These guys are—*.

Before he could finish thinking a sign frame opened at the side of his head. The thing that Michizane hurriedly indicated was...

Silver Wolf: “It is an emergency! Please check the sky surrounding IZUMO!”

The short words that were likely created hurriedly had immediate follow-up words. They were...

Silver Wolf: “The fleets of various countries are gathering as if to encircle IZUMO!”

Chapter 8: One who Jumps into the Enclosure

CHAPTER 8

"One who Jumps into the Enclosure"



Now
What will you demand?
Point Allocation (Memento)

Now

What will you demand?

Point Allocation (Memento)

Masazumi and Naito watched it all from the roof of the snack shop.

They looked out across the streets of IZUMO from a high position. They had heard voices questioning and egging on the fight that had broken out in the street ahead.

But now the people in the surrounding area were all directing question marks toward the sky. They all uttered confused and fearful questions regarding the new turn of events.

After hearing them, Masazumi looked out across the sky.

“I can see why they’re confused...”

IZUMO was surrounded by countless ships.

This was not just ten or twenty ships. There were more than a hundred, or even two hundred. Masazumi noted the national emblems on the sides of the ships.

“The ships coming from the north, west, and south are from Hexagone Française. The ones spread out from east to south are from M.H.R.R.”

Silver Wolf: “What is going on? Hexagone Française and M.H.R.R. are supposed to be enemies. Why are they working together to surround IZUMO?”

Mitotsudaira’s message sent to Masazumi’s sign frame showed that those on Musashi did not have a complete grasp of the situation.

Of course they don’t, thought Masazumi. I only just now learned about it from Jonson.

Vice President: “Everyone, listen up for a moment. Things are about to get bad.”

Masazumi sent a message out to everyone.

Vice President: “The reason Hexagone Française and M.H.R.R. are surrounding IZUMO is because the latter is refusing to allow Musashi to travel through its territory.”

Mitotsudaira read Masazumi’s message in front of her house along with Asama and Adele who peered at Mitotsudaira’s sign frame.

Vice President: “Musashi is not being allowed within M.H.R.R. Their justification for this decision is obvious.”

Silver Wolf: “They do not want Musashi to influence the civil war between Catholics and Protestants being carried out for the history recreation, right?”

There was a short pause just long enough for Masazumi to nod.

Vice President: “Exactly. If they use the history recreation as a shield, the Testament Union has no choice but to agree.”

“In that case...” said Adele as she stared into the eastern sky.

They could hear a noise. It was the low sound of the wind being pushed by the movement of a giant object. Musashi was moored on the eastern coast of IZUMO, so the M.H.R.R. ships approaching from the east were the loudest there.

Adele looked up while listening to what could only be described as a roar and she started her comment anew.

Flat Vassal: “Then are the ships coming from M.H.R.R. meant to keep Musashi from entering the country? That means this fleet must belong to...”

“This is bad,” agreed Mitotsudaira.

She could tell her eyebrows were raised due to the noise hurting her lupine sense of hearing.

Silver Wolf: “The M.H.R.R. fleet belongs to the Catholic principalities. That means they are under the influence of Hashiba and Student Council President Matthias. But...”

At that point, Mitotsudaira turned to the west. Hexagone Française’s fleet was gathering there on the other side of IZUMO.

...Why is Hexagone Française working to surround us as well?

She had a hunch, but she asked anyway because she wanted to hear an expert’s opinion.

Silver Wolf: “Masazumi, why is Hexagone Française’s fleet here?”

Vice President: “Judge. This is where it gets really bad.”

Listen up.

Vice President: “M.H.R.R.’s formation is meant to stop Musashi from entering their territory. In other words, it is in defense. As long as we do not enter their territory, they will not attack.”

Flat Vassal: “Then why is Hexagone Française here?”

Vice President: “To fight.”

Hearing their expert state it so decisively caused everyone’s shoulders to tremble. And then a voice called out from behind them.

“Oh, Nate! Nate! The storage shed in your backyard is full, so can I use your attic? Don’t worry! It’s the kind that opens from the top and not into the house!”

...Shut up.

At any rate, Mitotsudaira tapped Adele's shoulder and the dogs ran over, so it all worked out in the end.

Silver Wolf: “So, um, Masazumi. When you say they are here to fight...”

When Masazumi only sent a short “Judge” in response, Asama frowned.

“Hm. Tsukinowa may be cutting off her voice input too quickly.”

Hanami opened a settings sign frame and Asama got to work. Meanwhile, another message arrived from Masazumi.

Vice President: “As a major member of the Testament Union, Hexagone Française must carry out its obligations to the other countries. That is what I mean.”

This really is bad, thought Masazumi as she looked up at the shadows surrounding them in the sky.

A fan-shaped formation had already been created both to the east and the west. The density of ships was currently being increased by adding smaller ships.

...This is making everything more troublesome.

She sighed and spoke.

Vice President: “Tres España and England previously showed their allegiance to the Testament Union by attacking Musashi, so a large country like Hexagone Française must follow suit.”

In that case, Masazumi felt the safest route would be through the Protestant principalities of M.H.R.R. They had to avoid a fight with Hexagone Française who had their forces gathered here. A fight here could easily destroy all of Musashi's repairs being carried out in IZUMO.

“But our enemy took the initiative and is blocking our path through Protestant M.H.R.R. This isn’t good,” she muttered.

Naito nodded next to her.

“This was probably Hashiba’s idea. By keeping us from passing through M.H.R.R., they force us to pass through Hexagone Française and thus Hexagone Française will be the ones to intercept us, right?”

A message arrived at Naito’s Magie Figur as if to agree with her.

Mal-Ga: “Margot, are you okay? Has anything happened to you? Oh, but I don’t care about the nerd.”

Novice: “Why would you mention me!?”

Four Eyes: “Hmm...?”

...Huh? Was that some interference from another divine line?

They were on the roof of a shop funded by England, so it was not surprising someone from England could cut in.

Anyway, sighed Masazumi.

Naito sent Naruze a divine message detailing the situation and Naruze replied on the divine chat with her sigh almost audible in the words she wrote.

Mal-Ga: “In other words, Hashiba’s plan is pretty indirect. They have Hexagone Française intercept Musashi and, because Hexagone Française has sent out their forces, M.H.R.R. can send their front line to the west in the name of making their confrontation for the Thirty Years’ War. They can show their intention of invading to the west.”

Vice President: “Judge. That’s right. While M.H.R.R. can use stopping Musashi as a reason for their actions, they can also send their front line right up to the border between countries and claim they thought Hexagone Française might try

to invade while intercepting Musashi. ...Basically, Musashi is being used as an excuse.”

“That’s simplifying it a lot,” said Naito with a bitter smile. “Anyway, Seijun. What do you think is going to happen?”

“Well,” muttered Masazumi.

She had a lot to think about, but it would be best to gather everyone and discuss it together. For now, they needed to see what exactly the other countries were doing.

“I have already sent instructions to the different committees and the Provisional Council. What we need to focus on is that God of War that flew toward Neshinbara and the others in the city.”

They could see that craft with its blue wings. Naito stared at its blue back which had a shimmer and fragments of light rising from it. She then turned back to the east.

“It came from the east, didn’t it?”

“M.H.R.R. is preventing Musashi from traveling and another country took action when they learned that. Since Jonson and the English knew about it, the information must have come from M.H.R.R.’s Protestant principalities. Also, England would have been able to inform some other countries.”

In this age, there were two primary countries England traded with.

“The Association of Indian States and Qing-Takeda. That God of War is from...”

Novice: “It’s right in front of me. It’s from the Satomi clan of the Bousou Peninsula which borders Edo of the Matsudaira clan. They have an excellent small-scale yet combat-focused academy there that is primarily made up of the long-lived race. It looks like a few ships of theirs have arrived, but their main force... Well, look to the east with Naito-kun.”

Look to the east with Naito-kun? wondered Masazumi.

She turned to the girl to find Naito had already opened a speedometer-shaped Magie Figur that simply showed the sky on the other side.

“Is this what he meant?”

Naito spun the meter and the sky visible through it magnified like a telescope.

Displayed large inside the Magie Figur were countless shadows visible beyond the M.H.R.R. aerial fleet that appeared stopped in the sky.

A distant whistle boldly sent the signal announcing a trade ship even though they were clearly warships.

“They have the school emblems of Takeda, Houjou, and other nations in Kantou. According to the Far East’s history, they will all support Matsudaira. And since they are not Tsirhc, they can show defiance even if they belong to the Testament Union.”

Masazumi looked into the eastern sky where the fleet leisurely passed by over M.H.R.R.’s fleet.

“So they’re shamelessly using the Silk Road trade to come here. All of them are the vanguard of anti-Oda or anti-Hashiba forces, so this is a good reminder that the Far East takes action for more than just Europe’s issues.” Her shoulders lowered as she took a breath. “This is a critical situation, but it looks like some allies have arrived.”

“That’s right. So why don’t you settle down a little,” announced the long-lived girl standing in front of Futayo.

Futayo stood ready to fight on a building roof and she did not recognize this girl. The only hint to her identity was her Qing-Takeda uniform.

...Who is she?

However, the girl had stopped Futayo and the ninja.

Just before Futayo and the ninja had clashed, the long-lived girl had leaped in. She had moved between them with a single step and held her sheathed sword in between them. The long sword normally hung from a chain on her left waist.

It had been a lighthearted action, but she had easily avoided the weapons of Futayo and the ninja.

“Let’s put an end to the fighting for now.”

Futayo currently held Tonbokiri just off the roof, but the girl’s sword was already back at her waist. Futayo had not noticed her doing so.

...Who is this girl?

All of her actions appeared defenseless, but the long sword hanging from its chain on her left waist and the small bow hanging from her right waist were not even clasped in place. That meant she could draw them at any moment.

Her stance made it clear she could take action at any time.

And she was not the only unfamiliar face.

About two roads away was the blue God of War stopped with its sword pointed forward. Standing on that giant blade was a woman bearing four scabbards who had the horns of a Far Eastern ox demon growing from her head.

The four ninja had regrouped and were genuflecting on the street below.

They were all bowing their heads toward the long-lived girl in front of Futayo.

The girl turned from Futayo and looked down at the ninja.

“I see you’re doing well. How is your master?”

#1 nodded while down on one knee.

“Very well.”

“I see.”

The girl showed her teeth in a smile and a boy wearing glasses appeared on the opposite rooftop. He looked a bit nervous, but his voice carried well.

“I ask as the Secretary of Musashi’s Student Council: what is the meaning of this?”

He first pointed at the God of War behind him and then pointed at the long-lived girl.

“I never thought the heroes of Kantou would gather in the skies of Hexagone Française and the Mouri clan.”

Neshinbara saw Futayo turn toward him while tilting her head.

“The heroes of Kantou?”

“Judge,” he replied. He then indicated the God of War behind him using his chin. “Gods of War with dog faces are unique to the Satomi clan.”

...I’m amazed they could fly into the middle of the city like this.

They had landed after high speed flight without using a land port designed for that purpose. Also, he could see no effects to the surrounding buildings and ground except for what a strong gust of wind would cause.

Piloting that splendid goes beyond reckless, thought Neshinbara as he looked at the blue feminine God of War with canine head armor.

“This must be one of the leaders of the Satomi clan. Perhaps Satomi Yoshiyasu, the Student Council President of the Satomi clan which controls the Bousou Peninsula and Korea.”

“I am not worth being called a leader. There is nothing under my control.”

A long-lived girl appeared from the God of War’s back and walked out onto its bent arm. She was short and had short hair. She wore a Far East uniform modified to be lighter.

“Our King and Chancellor, ‘Retainer Killer’ Satomi Yoshiyori, is on one of the trade ships over there. Our flagcraft Yatsufusa and the spirit sword Murasamemaru are there as well. If you wish to give your greetings, direct them to him.”

“Eh!? Murasamemaru is there!?”

Four Eyes: “Are you getting excited over that kind of item again?”

Girls just don’t get it! It’s about the romance! silently shouted Neshinbara, but he held his tongue because he knew something horrible would happen to him long-distance if he actually said it. *This is a strategy. Yes, that’s it.*

When he looked forward again, Satomi Yoshiyasu was also staring straight forward.

But she was not looking at him. She was looking behind him.

He turned around to look at the God of War’s sword stretching out through the sky. Standing on the blade was the demonic long-lived woman who carried four swords.

Yoshiyasu did not bother hiding the harshness of her tone as she spoke to that woman whose eyes were closed.

“Houjou Ujinao, Chancellor of Odawara Academy, primary school of the Houjou clan. With Edo Bay between us, our clans are always fighting for control of the sea; but how about we stop that here?”

Satomi Yoshiyasu's God of War was in autonomous mode, so she used hand signals to have it change its stance.

...Honestly, that guy chooses some dangerous things.

The Satomi clan ruled the Awa Province at the tip of the Bousou Peninsula, so they had long fought with the Houjou clan of Odawara over control of Edo Bay. The Satomi clan was descended from the Minamoto clan of the Kamakura Shogunate, while the Houjou clan was descended from the Taira clan and came in from outside to inherit power during the downfall of the Kamakura Shogunate.

...The direct descendants were forced out while the outsiders came in and took over. And yet he told us not to fight during this journey.

But...

“Being unable to do anything with your enemy's leader before your eyes is most unfortunate, Chancellor Houjou Ujinao.”

She looked back toward the demonic woman, but the woman's eyes remained closed.

Even so, she sheathed her sword and turned toward Yoshiyasu.

“You are the ones who attacked us over control of Edo Bay. Why are you acting like it is our fault? If you are trying to give the Matsudaira clan and Musashi a poor impression of us, I can see this Chancellor is just as incompetent as the previous one, Yoshiyasu.”

“Don't compare the two!”

“Oh?” said Ujinao. “But you are allowed to compare them? Is that because you are the previous one's younger sister? Also...” She lightly brushed up her hair and looked toward Yoshiyasu's God of War. “That is quite a lovely God of War. Not a scratch on it.”

“...!”

Now she's said it, thought Yoshiyasu as she saw something directly ahead of her.

The exposed skin of Houjou Ujinao's arm contained a few black lines that seemed to run along the lines of her muscles.

She was a living automaton.

Houjou Ujinao heard a voice from a rooftop two streets away.

It was a carelessly muttered comment from a girl holding a spear.

“Is she an automaton like Horizon-sama?”

...That is Musashi's Vice Chancellor, Honda Futayo.

And between Ujinao and Satomi Yoshiyasu was Musashi's secretary, Neshinbara Toussaint.

Ujinao had no intention of making them her enemy. After all, the Testament descriptions said the Houjou clan she led would be destroyed by Hashiba's attack on Odawara during her generation. At the time, Hashiba's control meant the Matsudaira clan would be forced to aid in the attack on the Houjou clan.

...But once the Matsudaira clan gains control, they restore power to what remains of Houjou.

As she stared forward, Ujinao held up her arm to show it to Futayo for a few personal reasons.

“It is only the body. I had a weak constitution.”

“Judge. Thank you for answering.”

Futayo bowed and Ujinao nodded.

Ujinao then turned her thoughts toward the name Honda Futayo had mentioned.

...Horizon Ariadust.

That was the name of the automaton girl who held a unique position among the Musashi forces that every country was so focused on of late.

She possessed a few Logismoï Oplo and she was part of the Matsudaira family. The footage from Houjou's public relations committee had shown a naked boy with her at all times, but Ujinao did not know what that was about.

...Is he an optional feature? A shield, maybe? I have heard rumors he is a battery.

She had no clear answer.

At any rate, it seemed the people of Musashi possessed a spirit of freedom.

“My clan is traditionally a motley collection of races, so it makes me want to get along with you. However, Honda Futayo, I watched your fight just now.”

“Judge.”

“It worries me that there is a possibility I will fight you before the Matsudaira clan comes to power.”

Futayo tilted her head, but Neshinbara's mouth stiffened. Wondering what that meant, Ujinao tilted her head with a bitter smile, but then Futayo suddenly raised her hand.

“Oh, my apologies. You were referring to the history recreation concerning my father's name.”

“Testament.”

A smile formed on the corner of Futayo's mouth.

“I am still not skilled enough to inherit my father's name. It is most gracious of you to suggest it, but I believe it is more likely someone else will face you at Odawara.”

...Oh, dear.

Oddly, Ujinao felt as if she had been rejected; but it was not a particularly bad feeling. In fact, it caused curiosity to well up within her.

She decided she wanted to build as close a relationship with Musashi as possible; and then she looked next to Futayo.

Standing there was a long-lived girl wearing a Qing-Takeda uniform.

...Honestly, she loves her commotions.

Ujinao sighed as she looked at the girl.

“The Sanada clan is located to the north of us. Why are you attacking Musashi with those lowly ninja they refer to as their Ten Braves?”

“Unneeded #1: Sarutobi Sasuke.

“Unneeded #2: Kirigakure Saizou.

“Unneeded #3: Miyoshi Seikai.

“Unneeded #7: Unno Rokurou.

“All of them are at the Vice Chancellor level for a small academy. At a larger academy, they would be at least special duty officers if not higher. I would like to hear your reason for sending them after Musashi, Chancellor and Student Council President of Qing-Takeda.”

That is...

“You inherited the names of Takeda Shingen and Nurhaci, first Emperor of Qing. You are a long-lived direct descendent of the Minamoto clan who has also inherited the name of Kublai Khan, first Emperor of the former Empire of Yuan.”

Finally, Ujinao spoke her name.

“Minamoto Kurou Yoshitsune.”

Houjou Ujinao



Minamoto Yoshitsune



Satomi Yoshiyasu



Yoshitsune had a certain thought about Ujinao when her name was given.

...What a troublesome woman.

The Sanada clan and its Ten Braves were currently under the command of the Takeda clan, so she had been able to use the Ten Braves to attack Musashi.

“Well, you see...” began Yoshitsune before stopping to think.

...Why did I do that again?

She had a vague memory of one or the other of the Satou Brothers who held the position of Vice President telling her what to say, but she had completely forgotten what it was.

...If you aren't kinder when you tell me, I'm not going to remember. Those idiots need to learn how to handle a woman's heart.

At any rate, she decided honesty was the best policy.

“To be blunt, it's so much fun seeing other people fight.”

Ujinao smiled with her eyes closed and reached for the two swords on her shoulders.

...Crap. She can't take a joke like her predecessor, Ujimasa. For some reason, she never tries to read between the lines when it comes to me. That's discrimination. Then again, there's never anything between the lines to read with me.

At any rate, Yoshitsune snapped her fingers toward the ninja waiting in the street below.

“ ‘Unneeded #1’ Sarutobi Sasuke, you answer for me.”

She received no response.

What is going on? she wondered as she looked down.

The four ninja were gone.

She heard Musashi's secretary speaking from two roofs over.

"They ran away. I was impressed they could move that fast."

"I see." Yoshitsune nodded toward Satomi Yoshiyasu. "Satomi Yoshiyasu, you answer for me."

"How should I know!?"

...Quite the thoughtless girl for a descendent of mine.

"Okay, you in the glasses."

...I doubt he'll know.

"Why did I send those ninja after you?"

Yoshiyasu stared at her in disbelief, but Yoshitsune did not care what a child thought.

Are you saying you understand yourself perfectly!? Well!? she thought. Anyway, he isn't going to have an answer for me. Finding an excuse for Ujinao is going to be a pain.

But then Musashi's glasses boy began to speak.

"Okay." He adjusted his glasses. "I will give you an answer."

Yoshiyasu listened to Musashi's secretary as he opened up a few sign frames.

"Normally thinking, it is a bit of a stretch for people of Kantou to be here even with the Silk Road excuse," he said while looking at the sign frames rather than Yoshitsune. "You had to show you had no intention of opposing the Testament

Union. Rather than paying out money and handing out privileges, you took a faster route: you attacked Musashi. That let you measure our strength. If it went well, you would have demonstrated your own strength and would have a useful bargaining chip for the later negotiations. You used the Sanada Ten Braves to show they were freely under your command and their loss would not count as a direct loss for Qing-Takeda. ...That's probably more or less it." He nodded. "After all, Takeda, Houjou, and Satomi are all aided by Matsudaira later on. It's in your best interests to see how powerful they are."

Yoshiyasu's eyebrows rose as she listened to Musashi's secretary speak.

...Something bothers me about how he said that.

She folded her arms, looked down at her feet, and asked a question.

"You make it sound like the Satomi clan cannot survive without the Matsudaira clan."

"It is only natural that our opinions differ. We attend different academies. And if we have differing opinions, there is room for negotiations. You can see our Vice President about that. And...um...Lady Yoshitsune?"

"What is it?" asked Yoshitsune as she stood calmly two roofs over. "Out with it."

"Judge." Musashi's secretary nodded and straightened his back. "Please give me your autograph using the name Hougan Kurou Yoshitsune."

Almost Everyone: "What a nerd."

Novice: "C-come on! This is a once in a lifetime opportunity! I don't think you understand how important this is!"

Four Eyes: "Wow is that painful to watch."

Novice: “What!? You’re an author too, so don’t you want one? I always carry a few pieces of nice autograph paper with me, so just wait until these negotiations are over.”

Four Eyes: “Eh? Oh, okay...”

Almost Everyone: “Wow. Those two are close.”

“Now then.”

Neshinbara turned back toward Yoshitsune.

The two major fleets covering the sky to the east and west were beginning to expand to the north and south. The dozen or so Silk Road trading ships primarily from Qing-Takeda were flying above the fleet to the east.

“I will not decide why that Kantou fleet is here.”

But...

“But, Lady Yoshitsune, was I right about the ninja?”

“Will two signatures be enough?”

Novice: “See! I told you! I’m not getting any for the rest of you!”

Mal-Ga: “If you keep getting carried away like that, I’m putting you in a doujinshi.”

Novice: “Th-that’s quite an unpleasant threat...”

Well, I have the two signatures I need, so I’ll keep my head down for now to avoid ending up in a doujinshi, vowed Neshinbara.

To his right, Houjou Ujinao moved atop the giant sword stretching through the sky.

She relaxed from her previous stance.

“Isn’t that great, Lady Yoshitsune? Someone actually covered for you.”

“You’re just too intolerant. In fact, so is Yoshiyasu over there. You two need to be more open-minded.”

Yoshitsune puffed out her chest and jerked her chin toward the eastern sky.

“Now.”

The Kantou fleet giving off the signal of trade ships approached from that direction. Those ships from Kantou had now passed the distant M.H.R.R. fleet.

Yoshitsune watched her fleet enter the enclosure created by the fleets of those two powerful nations.

“Let us talk. We can use this dangerous time to discuss what kind of relationship we should have with the people of Matsudaira who will eventually rule this world. How about it?”

At 5:20 that evening, the aerial fleets of M.H.R.R. and Hexagone Française finished arranging their hundreds of ships to surround IZUMO which floated at an altitude of one kilometer.

Hexagone Française did so to shoot down Musashi because it was an enemy of the Testament Union.

M.H.R.R. did so to observe Hexagone Française, their enemy in the Thirty Years’ War, in case they tried to invade M.H.R.R.’s territory.

Hexagone Française announced they would provide a later announcement containing Musashi’s time limit to leave IZUMO. From the instant that time limit passed, they would attack Musashi.

A few guesses were made within Musashi as to what that time limit would be. Masazumi made some decisions assuming the limit would be based on the European lifestyle that focused work in the mornings.

“Naomasa, have the engine division hurry to prepare Musashi for departure. According to Neshinbara, they will likely finish their preparations in the morning and set the time limit for tomorrow afternoon.”

If that was true, Musashi’s repairs would have to be completed elsewhere and the loading of cargo and fuel would have to be carried out at an increased rate.

Meanwhile, the “trade fleet” of Kantou nations that had flown past Hexagone Française and M.H.R.R. moored at IZUMO’s eastern port. They ignored the two large nations watching and began trading.

At 7:15 that night, the city of IZUMO was filled with bright lights due to all the visitors from unusual places. Masazumi entered one of the lit buildings with Naruze along as a bodyguard.

She had arrived at the snack shop she had met Jonson at. She was there to “happen across” the Kantou representatives.

In IZUMO near the center of Europe, a discussion on the later history recreation of the Matsudaira clan was about to begin under the observation of a large nation.

Chapter 9: Instigators in the Dining Hall

CHAPTER 9

"Instigators in the Dining Hall"



When one feels needlessly nervous

It is not needless

Point Allocation (Feeding)

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It is not needless

Point Allocation (Feeding)

“So in the end Seijun went to the meeting with Naruze?”

Musashi’s Chancellor’s voice rang through the outer edge of Tama. The landing zone there was primarily used for diplomatic ships.

A dining area with a nice view was located there. That area was lit by the lights of the landing zone, but the lights of IZUMO’s city were visible not far away.

Mitotsudaira sat at one table which was set up for yakiniku.

...The chancellor is across from me, Naito is next to him, and...

For some reason, Horizon was next to Mitotsudaira. After glancing at the chancellor who was looking toward IZUMO, she turned toward Horizon.

“I may have only been invited by the chancellor after finishing bringing in some cargo, but shouldn't you sit next to the chancellor, Horizon?”

Horizon looked toward her and tilted her head. She also tied a paper apron around her neck.

“To more easily hit him? I see. That is indeed an excellent suggestion.”

The chancellor lost his nerve and laid his head down on the table, which contained a grill.

At the same time, large amounts of various meats arrived and Horizon began casually placing the plates on the chancellor.

Eh? thought Mitotsudaira; but five or six plates had already been placed on the idiot.

His reaction came later.

“Nwah!? Ah, wait, wait, wait! This is really, really, really heavy! What is this!? Is it love!? This is a heavy kind of love! This is what you call the desires of the flesh, isn't it!?”

“This is nothing but animal flesh meant to be eaten; it must be nice having such an active imagination.”

The idiot lost his nerve even further and went limp; soon Horizon finished balancing all of the plates on top of him.

Mitotsudaira looked over as the idiot shouted things like “Nwooooohh!”, but she was unsure what to say.

...Th-this conversation is too fast for me to keep up!

While Mitotsudaira truly wondered what to do, Naito calmly grabbed some meat from a plate on top of the chancellor and placed it on the grill. Once she finished cooking the meat, she tossed it onto Mitotsudaira's plate.

“C'mon, don't worry about the others. Start cooking and eating. You need both quality and quantity, right?” She grinned. “Let's get eating.”

Naito's comment got Mitotsudaira thinking.

...What should I do right now?

She had thought about a lot today. In fact, she had thought about a lot over the past few days.

She had thought about her own skill, about Mary, about the meaning of being a knight, and more.

...But if I make the others worry, it's all worthless.

“You are right. Judge. Let's eat.”

“Judge,” added Horizon with a nod. She turned toward Mitotsudaira. “But at that time, they could never have guessed what would happen afterwards.”

“Wh-what!? What is going to happen!?”

“I do not know. I simply felt I needed to make things more exciting as we are eating.”

“Um... I think we are supposed to get excited because we enjoy the food.”

Hearing that, Horizon began cooking and eating the meat with Naito. She then spoke expressionlessly.

“Wow, this is so delicious, Naito-sama.”

“Yes, it is. Wow. Delicious.”

“...Is that what you mean, Mitotsudaira-sama?”

...Wh-what is with her!?

Mitotsudaira was bad at ad-libbing, but she could tell the other customers were looking at them and whispering.

“Doesn't it look like Musashi's princess has taken a liking to the silver wolf?”

“And I thought Nate-sama was more into Masazumi-sama.”

“The relationship between ruler and knight sure is nice.”

...Eh!? What!? Is this really acceptable!? Or has everyone on Musashi been corrupted!?

Mal-ga: “Oh, damn. And there's probably a lot of material there.”

Silver Wolf: “That is not the issue here! Also, who is leaking our information!?”

Gold Mar: “Eh? Don’t be rude. I’m not leaking it. I’m just sharing it.”

Silver Wolf: “Y-you are the worst! The absolute worst!”

Vice President: “You people never give it a rest, do you?”

Mitotsudaira wanted to shout back “I really wish we would!”, but she remembered Masazumi was in a meeting. Instead, she sighed and pulled her personal chopsticks from her pocket.

Next to her, Horizon gestured toward the pile of plates on the chancellor and nodded.

“Now, eat as much as you want. It is all meat, but I suppose you prefer that.”

“No. It’s not like all I eat is meat.”

“Eh!?”

All the other customers stood up from their seats. She expected to hear cries of protest, but instead they all muttered blankly.

“You’re kidding...”

It turned out that this way of saying it was much more painful, so she spoke up as if trying to shake off the damage.

“Wh-what is with all of you? I do not live entirely off of meat. I enjoy wine with my meals and, as I mentioned this afternoon, I eat dairy-...”

Horizon pulled out a large pitcher of wine and a large pitcher of cream, and placed them on the backs of the idiot’s hands.

“No, wait. Stop crucifying me like a saint!”

“Mitotsudaira-sama, do not worry about it. Please continue. But if you insist on being shy, you can have these which I have brought out early.”

“No, um, I’m pretty sure drinking all that at once would make me sick!”

“Do not worry. To cleanse your palate, I have prepared some meat.”

“No, uh... Some vegetables are fine on occasion... I am a girl, after all.”

“Not a problem.”

Horizon used her chopsticks to point toward the plates on top of the idiot. She first indicated that the types of meat were divided by plate.

“Now, listen. Beef is meat and pork is fat, but lamb is a vegetable. After all, sheep eat grass.”

“W-wait! C-cows and pigs eat grass too!”

“They are no match for the vegetables known as sheep. Oh, and poultry is egg. Because they lay eggs.”

Mitotsudaira suddenly felt a bit dizzy.

Ahh, if only that were true. I could eat nothing but meat every day, she thought. No, but if that were the case, the low rate of productivity would undoubtedly lead to mankind’s destruction. Return to reality, Nate Mitotsudaira. The princess is still ignorant of the world.

But Horizon sighed and shrugged.

“Oh, dear. I cannot believe a meater like you does not know that.”

“Ehhhhh!? I-I’m wrong!?”

Just as she decided to correct Horizon, the entrance grew noisy.

Eh? she wondered as a number of people walked in.

Asama and Adele were in the lead, carrying a metal plate given Shinto divine protection. They were followed by Suzu, Tenzou, Mary, and the Tachibana couple.

Asama looked around, and then...

“Oh, there you are.”

Mitotsudaira sat up a bit and looked toward these friends who had just arrived.

“Are all of you eating dinner here too?”

“Yes.” Asama nodded and turned toward IZUMO. “With everything growing so busy in the sky, this is probably our last chance to have a meal while looking out on this scenery. And Masazumi and Naruze are over there, so we need to be able to head out right away if something happens.”

“Judge. That is true.”

Good. Everyone is giving this proper thought, inwardly sighed Mitotsudaira.

And then her gaze met Mary’s.

“...Ah.”

Before she could figure out what to do, Mary smiled and lowered her head, so she frantically nodded back.

...Honestly.

While she was still unsure how to handle the situation, the others sat down around them. The way everyone took up positions around the table without a word caused her shoulders to lower in relief.

...Everyone considers eating together to be an enjoyable activity.

They all turned toward her and nodded lightly.

“Thanks,” they said.

“Wh-why does that give me such a bad feeling!?”

“Huh? But Toori-kun said you were treating everyone to a meal.”

She slowly turned toward the idiot in front of her.

...Calm down. Calm down, Nate Mitotsudaira. As a knight, there would be no greater disgrace than killing your king. ...Do not entertain thoughts about doing it “just once”. On the other hand, doing it 0.5 times might be okay.

“Chancellor? Um... Do you have anything to say concerning everyone’s comments?”

“Oh c’mon, Nate. You’re thinking that I set you up, aren’t you!? You need to think more positively! This is a test!!”

“That is effectively the exact same thing!!”

“Judge, judge.” Horizon nodded and added a few pitchers on top of the idiot’s head. “Toori-sama, how about you say that while looking Mitotsudaira-sama in the eye?”

“Wait a minute! From the weight, I think you just put three on there. Is it just me, or is my skull creaking?”

“You can probably manage about two more,” commented Naito as she munched on a chicken skewer.

Mitotsudaira felt a bit like she was witnessing cannibalism, but then the people around her began mercilessly ordering plates.

“No. Wait, everyone.”

Everyone tilted their heads, but Mary alone tugged worriedly on Tenzou’s sleeve.

“Um, Master Tenzou? Are you sure this was not a misunderstanding on our part?”

...Wh-what a refreshing reaction!

Mitotsudaira was truly surprised. Hoping for a similar reaction, she turned toward the Tachibana couple.

“Yes, waiter? We would like three of these and two of these. Oh, and we will order more later. Yes, with barley in the rice. Spoons? No, no. Chopsticks are fine, thank you.”

This comparison taught Mitotsudaira that it was an issue of personality and not one’s origin.

...I need to remember that. It will help me give up more quickly.

At any rate, the way Mary tugged on Tenzou’s sleeve bothered her.

...Honestly.

“Do not worry. I will pay for today.”

Mary looked over in surprise and Tenzou held her hand.

“Listen, Mary-dono. Mitotsudaira-dono is from a Demi Loup-Garou family, but for a variety of reasons is now second in line to ruling the Far East. And she is also the representative of Mushashi’s knights.”

Right, right. Mitotsudaira nodded inwardly. *An excellent description. Well, if you overlook the fact that even the League of Knights is ignoring me.*

“But some gear fell out of place somewhere and now she is a natto master on a level that influences the Far East’s natto market. Some parts of the world, especially west of Kansai, say they have no tradition of soy to prevent her from encroaching on them as well. It is truly what you call a sticky situation. Oh, and this will be on the test. Anyway, after she gains so much money from selling

natto, Mitotsudaira-dono wants to return that money to the people; so she donates it by paying for us to eat meat.”

Correcting each and every untruth would have been a pain, so she thought about dealing with it all at once. Also, Mary was nodding in understanding, so she thought about stopping that right away.

Meanwhile, Horizon spoke while sticking skewers in the chancellor’s ears.

“Are you really okay with paying, Mitotsudaira-sama?”

At this point, there was nothing she could do about it. She would simply have to take time later to lecture the plate holder in front of her.

“I think I will deal with this via Heidi. She let me eat for free on that English beach, so I intend to pay her back double. And it will be cheaper if I buy directly from her Marubeya.”

“I see. ...Oh, the vegetables are done cooking, Mitotsudaira-sama.”

It was actually lamb, but Horizon picked up one of the sauce-covered “vegetables” with her chopsticks and held it up. Mitotsudaira only stared at her, so Horizon held it out even more invitingly.

“Um, Horizon? What are you doing?”

“Oh? It appears you do not understand why I chose to sit next to you.”

“Eh? Um, wait... Why is everyone staring at us!?”

Everyone let out frightened shouts and sank back into their seats, but she could still feel them glancing her way.

“Mitotsudaira-sama, if you do not eat it soon, it will grow cold.”

She groaned, thought a bit, and finally...

“I-I suppose I cannot let it grow cold...right?”

After making sure everyone heard her excuse, she pursed her lips and accepted Horizon's chopsticks.

...Masazumi and Naruze must be having a difficult meeting right now.

Meanwhile, Masazumi and Naruze were in the snack shop they had met Jonson in for the "coincidental meeting".

...This has gotten out of hand.

To disguise it as a coincidence, Masazumi had intentionally arrived at her seat a bit late. She was now checking over the situation once more.

Most of those within the snack shop were already completely drunk.

The biggest offender was Yoshitsune. She had apparently brought her own unglazed ceramic pitcher filled with old Qing liquor made from wheat and she was currently breaking it over the heads of those around her.

"Kah kah kah! Just have some fun, everyone! What's wrong with going nuts like this every so often!? Ah? What's your problem, you bald demon monk!? Try to eat my food again and I'll drown you at Dan-no-ura!"

The elderly can be unreasonable, thought Masazumi as she used chopsticks to poke at the soba-gaki that Walsingham served her in a teacup.

Yoshitsune was not the only drunk one. Jonson was completely gone and Sasuke was saying things to Saizou like "Y'know, you could stand to take some cooking lessons" or "Stop buying all those shoes you never wear." Meanwhile Unno Rokurou, who usually did the teasing, was laughing with or attempting to calm the other two.

However, the greatest victim was Satomi Yoshiyasu.

She was young. According to the Testament Union, she was a year younger than Masazumi. She had initially ignored the drinks, so Masazumi had assumed she was not interested in alcohol.

The problem had arrived when Ujinao, one of the drinkers, had sat next to her.

She had fallen for Ujinao's provocation and she was now sleeping on a chair at a table away from the center of it all.

Earlier, Yoshitsune had violently shaken her and suggested stripping off the girl's clothes. By the time the surrounding women had loosened Yoshiyasu's coat and shirt, they had fallen silent. With comments of "Poor thing", "I can't do this", "Why? Nothing worth seeing below?", "Nothing?", "Sh-she's still young!", "How big were yours at her age?", and "Well...", they began discussing Yoshiyasu's future development and ways to change it. Ultimately, the stripping plan was abandoned.

...But with Satomi Yoshiyasu passed out, we can't hold the meeting.

Masazumi wondered what to do while tearing pieces from her soba-gaki with her chopsticks and dipping it in soy sauce.

"Hey! Heyyyy, Musashi vice president!" shouted Yoshitsune. "Y-you...thi...ch-chah! Kah kah kah!"

Masazumi had no idea what the drunk was saying.

She ignored her some more and finished her soba-gaki. She poured the remaining flavorings and soy sauce into the teacup containing the water the soba-gaki had been soaking in and drank it. She then heard Naruze speak while she worked on roughs for a doujinshi.

"You're pretty elegant."

"Am I? My mother taught me my manners, so it's hard for me to judge."

"I bet these manners turned your dad on."

“My father is not that kind of person. He is apparently holding a meeting with influential people in our house today. He had me clean up my room before leaving and had me prepare some snacks for the meeting. I suppose being able to boss around the vice president is part of his status as a councilor.”

“Hm. Sounds strict. But I bet there’s a ton of backstabbing in meetings like that.”

It was nighttime, but the Honda household had all of its lights on and was filled with life.

“See!? I bet you’re jealous now! My Masazumi made these hors d’oeuvres! Heh heh. If you don’t bow down and hand over some of your rights, I won’t give you any!”

“Kh! That’s not fair, Nobu-tan! Th-then I take this sofa hostage!”

Nobu-tan turned to the side and pointed toward Konishi who was trying to touch the sofa.

“You fool! Masazumi made that sofa cover with the skills my wife taught her! Taking the first seat there is my right as head of the household!”

“Enough, you two! Let’s get down to the business at hand. Let’s watch the final episode of ‘Distinguish Good from Evil! Magical Girl Desdemona’ we recorded! We’re about to be busy, so this is our last chance to watch it! The OP was omitted for the finale, so we can act it out on our own beforehand. Provisional Council, I hope you have all perfectly memorized the dance.”

“Wait,” said Masazumi’s father as he passed out shirts printed with the characters. “Masazumi cleaned that divine television by breathing on it and wiping it off. If you want to touch it, you need to give me one of your rights.”

“Y-you really play dirty, Honda Masanobu!”

“Yeah. My father and the others are apparently masters of intrigue. He came home in a really bad mood the other day, complaining that Konishi had extorted a ton of rights out of him. He seemed to want to be really close to me.”

“I see.”

Naruze nodded and took some notes in her Magie Figur sign frame.

“What are you going to use that material for?”

“Oh, don’t worry about it. I’ll make sure you don’t find out.”

“Please stop!”

“Oh, c’mon. Plus, most of what I draw is going to end up unpublished.”

“Really?”

Naruze nodded while scratching her head with the bottom of her pen. She seemed unable to gather her thoughts because she tried to cross her legs and hit her knee on the bottom of the table.

“In Europe, most of Musashi’s literary club’s material is handled by M.H.R.R.’s Protestant principality of Saxony. The history recreation allows new commercial printing technology there thanks to the rise of Protestantism. We’ve done a lot of business with Magdeburg’s ‘Hemisphere Printing’.”

“So being blocked from M.H.R.R. is causing you trouble...”

“I might be able to send the data itself over divine transmission. We usually pick up the published books at a nearby hub port, but shipping costs are huge just before an event.

“I see,” said Masazumi with half-lidded eyes.

She had already sighed a few times since arriving and she did so again.

And then...

“It sure is lively in here.”

She suddenly heard a male voice from behind. She turned around and found a young man wearing a Far Eastern coat over a modified Qing-Takeda uniform.

He was of average height and a sword with a blue scabbard hung at his waist.

Behind him on the road was a God of War. Only its legs and waist were visible from inside, but the countless scratches visible on its armor told of just how many battles it had seen. However, something else was even more important.

...When did it land here?

Even Masazumi could tell what this meant and Naruze had already begun moving. All of a sudden, she was standing and had countless crop mark frame Magie Figures around her. She was drawing walls to provide defense.

As Naruze closed the Magie Figur containing her doujinshi rough, she pointed her pen toward the young man.

“I know who you are. During the summer event at Edo, the Houjou clan is always arguing with another clan over who will guard the coast. That clan is the Satomi clan.”

“I am glad you know us,” said the young man with a troubled smile.

Masazumi also knew who he was.

“You are the Satomi clan’s Chancellor, Satomi Yoshiyori.”

Masazumi saw the young man nod at her with his eyes narrowed as if in a smile.

“I am very glad that Musashi’s forces know me. I hope you can get along with the Satomi clan. After all, we are a small nation and it is difficult to hold a stable relationship with Musashi as your Chancellor’s Officers and Student Council are replaced each and every year. I hope this will make for a good opportunity.”

“Judge. We look forward to expanding our options when planning our future actions.”

“Ha ha.” He placed his hand on the back of his neck and laughed bitterly. “I just want to ensure Satomi’s future stability. You can depend on us.”

Hearing him speak and seeing the scratches on the God of War behind him told Masazumi something.

...He has to have seen a lot of hardship.

Asama: “If he is protected by his name, he may have lived while relying on duty and honor. ...Oh, by the way, I will be providing support from here.”



Satou Brothers



Satomi Yoshiyori

As that divine transmission from Asama arrived, two more figures arrived behind Yoshiyori.

They were old men. They were both long-lived and used long swords in place of staffs. They glanced at the commotion further inside, sighed, and turned toward Masazumi.

“We are the Satou Brothers, Vice President of Qing-Takeda’s Kakura Academy.”

She knew them as well. Both of the old men had the wrinkles and gray hair of age and they were indistinguishable from one other. However, their posture was quite good for being elderly.

...They must still be training their bodies despite being so old.

They both bowed at the same time.

“Vice Chancellor Benkei could not come, so you will have to settle for us.”

“Ah.” Masazumi frantically stood up and lowered her head. “Satou Brothers, I heard that the two of you hold the position of Qing-Takeda’s Vice President together. I look forward to speaking with you, but...”

Which was the elder brother and which the younger? Even the color of their equipment was identical, so she was not sure how to tell them apart.

In response to her unspoken question, both old men pointed at themselves and spoke in unison.

“Oh, I am the older brother.”

They paused for a moment and exchanged a glance.

“You have guts trying to look good in front of a young girl, younger one.”

“What’s that? You know I’m the older one. Have you forgotten what our mother said?”

They were so indistinguishable that Masazumi wondered if their mother had only pretended to know.

“Excuse me, but how am I supposed to tell you two apart?”

“It is easy.” They both nodded, pointed at each other, and spoke at the same moment. “He is the younger one. You can tell by how much of an idiot he-...”

They both trailed off simultaneously and looked at each other.

...Oh, no. I shouldn't have asked.

“Um, what business do you have with Musashi?” she asked.

“Eh? Oh.” The Satou brothers simultaneously looked further back in the building, lowered their shoulders, and scratched at their heads. “Lady Yoshitsune predicted this would happen, so she sent us to handle the meeting.”

“That’s right.” Satomi Yoshiyori looked over to where Yoshiyasu was sleeping and nodded. “I apologize for Yoshiyasu. She’s terrible with alcohol. I hope you understand.”

“Well, it wasn’t her fault someone brought such strong liquor to a meeting.”

Meanwhile, the Satou Brothers hung their swords from their backs and began preparing bamboo benches out front.

They intended to separate from those inside and hold the meeting. Noticing this, Houjou Ujinao casually stood up from her seat and walked over.

The meeting was about to begin.

But Naruze suddenly passed her a Magie Figur with a handwritten message.

It was titled “Concerning Satomi Yoshiyori”.

...What is this?

Masazumi read through the text which was made so each word disappeared after she read it.

“Listen. That nerd just sent over some information.”

Then came the information.

“You have me as a bodyguard, but be careful. The Satou Brothers and all the others from Kantou are fierce warriors who will do anything if necessary. That sword hanging from Satomi Yoshiyori’s waist is the spirit sword Murasamemaru. When I told that glasses-wearing history nerd, he almost ran over here, but don’t forget that man is ready for battle at any time.”

She continued reading.

“Also, you probably already know, but this is the second Satomi Yoshiyori. He was originally a military commander named Masaki Noritoki who acted as the Satomi clan’s chief retainer. But he killed the original Satomi Yoshiyori and took over the inherited name. That was taken in the reverse sense to give him his Urban Name ‘Retainer Killer’.”

She had known that. She had heard of the incident when it happened and it was mentioned in the almanacs of Chancellor’s Officers and Student Councils that the Testament Union published.

...And the original Satomi Yoshiyori that this man killed was...

“The older sister of Yoshiyasu sleeping over there.”

Study:

●The Minamoto Clan and the Taira Family 1●



"Sis! Sis! People are talking about all sorts of old stuff! What's the deal with the Minamoto clan and Taira family!? All I know is that the Minamoto clan is cool with everything from housewives to lolis while the Taira family has to put a stop to anything that's erect!"



"Heh heh heh. Foolish brother, both of those are just stories. Anyway, the division between Minamoto and Taira is a bit complicated, so are you sure you want me to explain it?"



"I feel like you're making fun of me there, but let me be clear about one thing: if you don't explain it simply, I won't understand!"



"Well, to put it simply, both the Minamoto and Taira clans were originally part of the imperial family. But as the generations went by, they strayed from the direct line and were no longer recognized as part of the imperial family. But the emperor gave them surnames to give them a proper lineage and made them his retainers."



"So it was a thinning of the blood."



"More or less, yes. This mostly applied to the people in the same generation as the emperor's grandchildren. Now, the surnames they were given were Minamoto and Taira. However, those surnames were not given to individuals or to a single family. They were a collection of families with the same ancestors, so they were classified as a 'clan'."



"The Genpei War that Yoshitsune appeared in was fought between the Minamoto and Taira clans, right?"



"Not exactly. See, the Minamoto and Taira were both 'clans', so they were collections of different Minamoto families and Taira families. During the Genpei War, the Minamoto clan had all of the Minamoto families with them, but the Taira clan which fought against them was just one Taira family led by Taira Kiyomori. The rest of the Taira families joined with the Minamoto clan. The Satou Brothers are from the Bandou Taira clan which was another powerful Taira clan in the east."



"Wait, wait. Doesn't that make it really tough for that one Taira family?"



"They may have been in the minority, but they controlled the Imperial Court and could send orders across the entirety of the Far East. During the Genpei War, both sides viewed the other as enemies of the Imperial Court. One side was seen as usurping control from it while the other was seen as opposing it. In the end, victory went to the Bandou Taira clan, the other Taira clans, and the Minamoto clan who won the Imperial Court to their side. The 'Taira family' which opposed them was destroyed."



"Wait a second, sis. I just realized nothing about this was 'simple'."



"Why do you always point out what I was trying to leave unsaid?"

The Minamoto Clan and the Taira Family 1

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Toori: Wait a second, sis. I just realized nothing about this was "simple".

Kimi: Why do you always point out what I was trying to leave unsaid?

Chapter 10: Cheerful People under the Night Sky

CHAPTER 10

"Cheerful People under the Night Sky"



Strangely
This brings smiles
To people's faces
Point Allocation (Gathering Place)

Strangely

This brings smiles

To people's faces

Point Allocation (Gathering Place)

“Kimi, don't you have to go to that table?”

Suzu sat next to Asama, Kimi and Adele sat across from her, and an extra grill had been placed in the center. Asama was preparing seven-grain fried rice for everyone.

She asked her question while looking behind Kimi at Mitotsudaira, Horizon, Naito, and the plate holder one table over.

But Kimi did not even turn around.

“Heh heh. As long as my foolish brother is getting along with them, it does not matter. If he was feeling lonely, that would be another matter. Incidentally, Horizon has changed quite a lot.”

“Yes. Her restraint towards Toori-kun is vanishing more and more. Perhaps this is due to the greed.”

“Hm...” groaned the four girls as they lowered their heads a bit.

A waiter brought out the ingredients for the fried rice. Asama had brought the metal plate for the grill, but it would have been rude to bring her own ingredients to the restaurant. She had instead bought freshly cooked rice from them and would fry it herself.

“Um, I will set up a barrier on that side of the grill, so please grill your meat and vegetables there. The barrier has a purifying effect though, so it might lose some flavor.”

“Oh, I don’t really like liver, so that might actually help me eat it.”

“Heh heh heh. Adele, why not go be a child at Asama’s house?”

Kimi grabbed a chicken skewer from the grill while watching her Mouse, Uzy, fly up from her cleavage and dance in midair with Hanami.

“But Masazumi and Naruze have it tough. They have the meeting now and then what comes afterwards.”

“What comes...afterwards?”

“Judge.”

Kimi placed the chicken skewer on Suzu’s plate and took another for her own plate.

She turned toward IZUMO’s city where the important meeting was taking place.

Asama turned in the same direction and used the night-vision option of her Konoha left eye to see through the darkness.

Somewhere in the lights of IZUMO’s city, Masazumi was having her meeting. She had a divine transmission connection, so she could ask for help in an emergency.

We need to stay focused, Asama told herself before seeking a consensus with the others while mixing the fried rice.

The topic at hand was of course the situation aboard Musashi.

“Based on the prayer questionnaires at the Asama Shrine’s contract locations and household shrines, the battles at England and the ships surrounding us today are making the people uneasy and fearful. Masazumi had determined our victory in the armada battle would prevent war-weariness, but...”

“War...weariness?” Suzu tilted her head. “What is...that?”

“War-weariness? What is that, Makiko?”

Sanyou’s voice filled the open-air terrace.

This terrace belonged to a beer garden on the starboard-side deck of Takao, Musashi’s third starboard ship.

Oriotorai had come with Sanyou and she now opened her mouth to speak while leaning her long sword against a table on a part of the outer edge of the deck with a nice view.

“Well,” she began while looking out at IZUMO’s nighttime scenery. “It’s the feeling of wondering how long the war is going to last. You could call it growing sick of war. While fighting, you’re full of energy, so you don’t get that feeling very much. It mainly comes out when you lose or enter a stalemate. After all, war is a lot of trouble and it brings a lot of unease.”

Sanyou looked up a bit.

...It is true that day after day of wondering if we will win or not is exhausting.

Sanyou placed her bag below a table made from a large slice of a log and finally nodded.

“I suppose you normally do want war to end as quickly as possible.”

“Judge. That’s why we need to balance out that unease by clearly gaining something from the war. Once people start thinking we would be better off quitting, their cooperation will drop. Governments used to release only the convenient information to prevent that feeling of war-weariness, but these days, people can obtain information on their own using the divine network and other methods.”

Oriotorai pulled out a chair at the table and looked toward Tama.

“So to prevent war-weariness, we need to at least keep winning.Oh, Mitsuki, is this table okay? You’re afraid of heights, right?”

“This is fine, Makiko. So, um...”

As Sanyou turned toward Tama as well, she noticed a large number of people at an open-air dining area in the diplomatic deck there. It was hard to tell from a distance, but Oriotorai’s gaze told Sanyou who they were.

...That is Class Plum.

The students who lead Musashi were there.

She had once told them something that had essentially been a lecture. Her thoughts had not changed since then, but she had an additional thought now.

...They have begun to fall into step, so I hope they can continue on to the end while remaining true to themselves.

But when Oriotorai spoke, her voice contained a sigh.

“The situation isn’t exactly good right now.”

As Sanyou watched, Oriotorai looked away from Tama. She sat in a chair and raised a hand toward a waiter.

“Speaking of war-weariness, the other countries have it easier. They only have to fight if Musashi, their enemy, arrives. On the other hand, Musashi has to keep fighting. We’re at a disadvantage there.”

“Judge.” Sanyou nodded. “That is why our victory in the armada battle was so important, right? Now that we have defeated Tres España’s fleet, which was considered the strongest of the age, the other countries will not be rushing in to pick a fight with us.”

The people had been in high spirits despite Musashi being repaired because they felt the possible long, drawn-out war would be easier from here on. They saw the repairs as preparations for that.

“But...”

Sanyou sat in a chair and looked up into the sky.

To the east, west, south, and north, two great fleets were spread out across the night sky. Their identifier lights showed which were from Hexagone Française and which were from M.H.R.R. and some had their main lights on to show off their presence.

Sanyou sighed and continued speaking as she saw those groups of shadows looking down on them.

“But now two countries have us surrounded. Not only that, but they are supposed to be enemies in the Thirty Years’ War and they have another antagonistic relationship as the Mouri clan and Hashiba clan.”

But...

“Musashi’s repairs are only 70% complete. And the great size of the ship means it will take half an hour between takeoff and leaving the airspace, even with preparations.”

“It was quite a shock when Regno Unito used that opening to target us at Mikawa.”

It frightened Sanyou how Oriotorai could say that with a smile.

The waiter arrived and Oriotorai made the dangerous order of “everything on this page, in order”. Sanyou was worried if the other woman had enough money.

...She has been in a cheerful mood ever since visiting IZUMO this afternoon.

She had said she had met her teacher who was an important person to her, but Sanyou had difficulty imagining what kind of person that was. Meanwhile, she made her own order.

Once the waiter left, Sanyou once more looked up at the ships surrounding them in the sky.

“This time, it is not a single ship like Regno Unito. And I have a feeling they will view us as having ‘left IZUMO’ and begin targeting us from the moment we takeoff.”

So...

“What are we supposed to do?”

That question was likely being asked all across Musashi.

Oriotorai’s expression changed to a slight smile.

“Don’t worry. It’s their job to figure that out and we’ve done a lot and are still doing a lot to make sure they can do so.”

“I...”

Sanyou started to say she did not think she had done a very good job, but she stopped when she saw the other woman’s smile.

...If I don’t do a good job, why even have teachers?

So...

“Being a teacher isn’t easy.”

“Really? You just have to teach them what you can, and then leave it up to them. Make sure they don’t let the important things get away, Mitsuki. And look. We aren’t the only ones they’re relying on.”

Oriotorai used her chin to point toward Tama where more figures were gathering around the tables.

“Comrades have a way of gathering together. Do you think that’s Naomasa and her group?”

...I’m surprised they could make it during this busy time.

Asama piled fried rice on a plate for Naomasa who had wiped off the bare minimum of filth. She heard Mitotsudaira yelling “More!? Eh!? Really!?” behind her, but she ignored it.

Naomasa had oil on her cheek and her shoulders shook as she looked around the area.

“Don’t look so down during this chance to eat out. If you’re down, it’s up to us in the engine division to cheer up Musashi. After all, we have to work all night so we can leave tomorrow. We came here to boost everyone’s spirits.”

“Thanks,” said Asama with a nod. She then noticed a small figure wearing a lab coat. “Oh, it’s that underclassman who transferred in.”

The girl’s name was Mishina Hiro. The nervous way the ponytailed girl said “hi” had an innocence to it, but Naomasa slapped her on the back.

“Oh, c’mon. On the way here, you were boasting that you weren’t at all afraid of Musashi’s strongest shooter shrine maiden. Did you lose your nerve upon seeing the real deal?”

“N-no, Masa. It’s just...she’s bigger than I expected.”

She must mean my height, thought Asama to reassure herself.

“Wait. When did I become the strongest?”

“Eh? You’re the only one in the genre of ‘shooter shrine maidens’, so you’re the strongest by default.”

“Oh, that makes sense.” She started to nod, but then frantically shook her head. “Wait! That’s not right at all.”

“Calm down,” said Naomasa while waving her false arm.

She took up her position leaning against the partition dividing the passageway and then she turned toward Adele.

“Sorry, Adele, but Musashi’s maintenance has taken priority, so we haven’t had a chance to work on your mobile shell. We have to get everything done as quickly as possible to leave tomorrow, after all. Sorry.”

“That’s fine. It only lost a bit of the armor in England, so I can use it as is in an emergency. But what about you? Are you fine without parts for Jizuri Suzaku? IZUMO wouldn’t sell us lightweight combat parts for a female god of war, right? What you got were only work parts.”

“I showed off too much at Mikawa and in the armada battle, so it seems the Testament Union is counting it as a weapon now. Although, you need a lot of power to maintain Musashi, so the combat parts were a lot more convenient.”

“Masa, does that mean you can’t send Jizuri Suzaku into battle?” asked Asama.

She nodded back and stopped moving.

“I don’t like it. I do realize providing backup and providing assistance on Musashi with the engine department helps plenty in a battle. I know heading out onto the front lines isn’t the only way to fight,” she said. “But I feel my responsibility is up front.”

“Heh heh. You are the type of woman that is prepared to do what it takes, aren’t you?”

“That’s just my nature,” said Naomasa with a small smile.

Seeing Kimi return the smile, Asama had a sudden thought.

...That's nice.

Not even she was sure what about it was nice, but Suzu was also turned toward the two of them with a relaxed expression.

It had given her some kind of relief.

...That's why it is nice.

They had comrades who drove away their unease.

With that in mind, Asama breathed a silent sigh of relief.

“I see.”

“Heh heh. What is so funny, Asama? How about you say it? You do not have to tell us, but we will ask.”

“No, it's nothing really. It's so common I can't think of the right words. ...But I know two things for sure.”

“And they are?” asked Kimi immediately.

Asama nodded and split the pile of fried rice with the spatulas so she could immediately carry it to a plate.

“First, Masazumi, who is at her meeting in IZUMO, and Toori-kun, who has been made into a plate holder over there, have more than just us with them. And second...”

What is the second one?” asked Mitotsudaira from the other table.

Asama nodded with a serious expression.

“A tragedy is about to occur!”

“...Eh?”

Mitotsudaira looked around in confusion.

...What kind of tragedy?

And then she saw it. In the center of her vision, a large number of people were entering.

They were the rest of the engine division and...

“What’s this? I received a message about free food. Mitotsudaira-dono, the field operation group and I must thank you.”

Futayo, the rest of the former Mikawa guard unit, and Musashi’s field operation students who trained under them all entered.

“W-wait! What is this!? This is way too many people!” shouted Mitotsudaira.

“Don’t you get it, Nate? This is a test!” said the plate holder.

Mitotsudaira silenced the idiot by slamming down a large pitcher like a hammer. She then counted the number of people arriving and calculated the damage with a calculator sign frame.

“C-can I just pay half! Please let me just pay half! I have no idea what is going on today!”

Asama, Naito, and the others nodded and spoke.

“It’s pretty unusual to understand what goes on around here.”

...I feel like there is a lot of noise coming from Musashi.

Masazumi grabbed a dango while sitting on a bamboo bench placed in the night time street.

Two benches were set up so the negotiation parties could face each other.

Masazumi sat on the store side while her opponents sat on the street side. Naruze and Houjou Ujinao sat to her right while Satomi Yoshiyori and the Satou Brothers sat across from her.

The Sanada Ten Braves were acting as Yoshitsune's bodyguards and Takeda held authority over them, so the Sanada clan was not taking part in the meeting. Jonson and Walsingham of England had moved back to the counter and showed no sign of joining.

...That means this meeting will take place between Musashi, Takeda, Houjou, and Satomi.

“Now then,” said Masazumi. “As Musashi and the Kantou forces have ‘just so happened to meet here’, how about we exchange information?”

Study:

●The Minamoto Clan and the Taira Family 2●



"Sis! Sis! What happened to the Minamoto clan and the Taira clan after the Genpei War!?"



"Heh heh heh. Clan brother, to be honest, explaining that would get a bit long. After all, the Minamoto clan began the Kamakura shogunate, but the Houjou clan eventually took control of it and they were descended from the Taira clan. But it was Ashikaga Takauji, a Minamoto, who defeated the Kamakura shogunate and started the Muromachi shogunate."



"Oh, wow. It's like a never ending curse, isn't it? "



"The Satomi who are currently here in IZUMO belong to the Minamoto clan. After they were defeated along with the Kamakura shogunate, their descendants went on to rule in Awa. The Houjou who are also here are very distant relatives of the Houjou clan that controlled the Kamakura shogunate, so they are not directly related to them. However, they are also from the Taira clan. They originally called themselves the Ise clan, but when they overthrew their ruler and conquered Sagami, they took the name Houjou in reference to the Kamakura Houjou."



"Wait a second. So even in the Sengoku period, all these commanders were descendants of the Minamoto clan and the Taira clan?"



"They were like a kind of brand name. One's 'status' based on tradition and old documents was important in that age. The Minamoto and Taira clans contained imperial blood, so they were a lot like the saints of Europe. That is why a lot of commanders and warriors would falsely claim to be from one of the two clans. Being from one or the other clan also caused disagreements between daimyos and military commanders. The fact that the Minamoto-ruled Muromachi shogunate defeated the Taira-ruled Kamakura shogunate influenced a lot of things."



"I can see why they called it the warring states period. They were settling all the issues from the past."



"That's right. But interestingly enough, there were some differences between the Oda, Hashiba, and Matsudaira clans that put the Sengoku period in motion."

•**Oda:** Descended from a political or Shinto family of the Fujiwara or Inbe clan. Later professed to be from the Taira clan.

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"They just made it up as they went along, didn't they?"



"Well, one's surname was one's role in that age. Now, to take the position of chief advisor to the Emperor, Hideyoshi was adopted into the previous advisor's Konoe clan (Fujiwara clan), but he later changed his surname to Toyotomi. This was due to a tradition of the chief advisor being from the Fujiwara clan and being a noble. On the other hand, Matsudaira needed to be from the Minamoto clan to become shogun, so he claimed to be from that clan. Both of them were focusing on the meaning of their surname and clan. That is what you need to keep in mind when thinking about the 'Three Positions Recommendation' that the Imperial Court gave Nobunaga, who claimed to be from the Taira clan, just before Honnouji. They told him he could take the position of chief advisor, shogun, or chancellor of the realm, so it's quite an amazing story."



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The Minamoto Clan and the Taira Family 2

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Toori: Oh, no. I don't have a joke this time.

Chapter 11: Failure to Understand at the Storefront

CHAPTER 11

"Failure to Understand at the Storefront"



If something is uncertain
Yet not wrong
What does it have?
Point Allocation (Earnest)

If something is uncertain

Yet not wrong

What does it have?

Point Allocation (Earnest)

Masazumi looked across those sitting on the opposite bamboo bench and let out a voice.

“This may be a bit soon after coincidentally running across each other, but I would like to ask you something.”

She had one thing to ask first.

...Why are they here?

She understood that the Kantou forces wanted to be on friendly terms with Matsudaira which would rule Kantou in the future, but there was no real reason why they had to do that now. They could even wait to start until Matsudaira ruled the Far East.

...So why did they charge into this dangerous situation?

It seemed certain that they had indeed come to rescue Musashi. If Matsudaira was lost, Kantou would lose its stability.

That was why they would reach out to help Musashi in its plight.

It was a simple and moving story.

And that was exactly why Masazumi chose not to trust in that. After all...

“Nations take action for their own survival and prosperity. Even if it will bring peace in the future, I doubt you would come here in the present.”

She held a plate in her left hand and glanced toward the god of war named Yatsufusa behind Yoshiyori and the Satou Brothers. The sword hanging at its waist was likely the god of war version of Murasamemaru.

...Neshinbara would probably insist that I take a picture.

She wondered if they would give her permission to photograph it.

“Why are you here?”

The first to answer was one of the Satou Brothers. The two of them faced each other.

“In order to trade. Right, little brother?”

“Yes, I do believe it was to trade, little brother.”

As the two old men began tugging at each other’s cheeks, Yoshiyori shrugged.

...I suppose they can’t ignore their official claim that they are here to trade.

“I am not used to meetings as unusual as this. ... Would you permit me to exchange opinions with my comrades via sign frame?”

“As long as you do not transmit raw audio or video footage,” said Yoshiyori.

Ujinao and the Satou Brothers nodded as well, so Masazumi turned her focus toward the restaurant.

“Kah kah kah! You arhijaaaah!? Ahh!? Hah hyah ho! Ah peh peh!”

That side of things had surpassed “incomprehensible” and reached an entirely new level, so Masazumi told herself to avoid looking in that direction at all costs.

Vice President: “Okay. I have coincidentally met up with representatives of Qing-Takeda, Houjou, and Satomi. Does anyone know what they are after?”

Asama: “What is your guess, Masazumi?”

Vice President: “Takeda, Houjou, and Satomi are all clans which will eventually be absorbed by Matsudaira and receive its protection. Most likely, they realized Musashi would have difficulty arriving in Kantou due to M.H.R.R.’s flight restriction, so they are here to help come up with a way around that. That much I know.”

Worshipper: “If you know that much, shouldn’t this meeting go smoothly?”

Novice: “Not necessarily.”

Wise Sister: “It is time for today’s super history nerd lecture.”

Novice: “Sorry, but the topic tonight is politics! Anyway, they did indeed come here because they were worried about Musashi. But just as Vice President Honda-kun said, we don’t know why they are truly here. I have a few different ideas:

“1: To help us break free of this situation.

“2: To tell us we are done for.

“3: To see how we will react.

“That’s about all I can think up. It would be easy enough to choose one at random and head forward based on that, but it would bring tragedy if it didn’t match their intentions.”

“Tachibana Husband has entered. Tachibana Wife has entered due to shared settings.” “Scarred has entered.”

Me: “You can read Tachibana Husband as Tachi Hanao, but would it be mean of me to do so?”

Tachibana Wife: “Master Muneshige, Musashi’s chancellor is saying my screen name can be read Tachi Bride.”

Tachibana Husband: “That’s right. A bridal gown decorated with red camellias would suit you perfectly, Gin-san.”

Wise Sister: “Such passion! What is with this heat!? Quick, Asama! Cool me down! Cool me down!!”

Vice President: “That’s a lot of intensity. I guess when the Tachibanas speak, there is nothing Tachi-banal about it.”

Almost Everyone: “That cooled things down!!”

...Huh? That’s odd.

Masazumi frowned at everyone’s reaction.

But Neshinbara was mostly right. Had the Kantou forces arrived to help, to sever their ties, or...

...Are they here to decide which way to take this?

Neshinbara’s third option of “to see how we will react” was most likely correct, so continuing the discussion based on that assumption had the lowest odds of causing harmful misunderstandings.

With that, she made up her mind.

...If they are here to judge us, we need to give them something to judge us with.

That meant there was one thing she had to say first.

“Musashi intends to head south after leaving tomorrow morning.”

The representatives of different academies looked up a bit.

“We will travel to Mikawa and then to Kantou.”

Those sitting on the benches tensed a bit.

And so Masazumi took a breath and slightly relaxed her legs.

“I have no intention of providing lip service. Now that Musashi cannot complete its repairs in IZUMO, we want a safe place to continue those repairs. We were always intending to trade in Kantou, so we wish to take a brief rest in Matsudaira’s territory of Mikawa before continuing to Edo, where we can complete our repairs in the floating dock Kantou IZUMO has for Musashi.”

She used her left thumb to point toward the M.H.R.R. ships in the eastern sky.

“Personally, I had hoped to go to Westphalia to show our political intentions, but there is no chance of advancing to the Peace of Westphalia with Hexagone Française and M.H.R.R. the way they are. K.P.A. Italia and M.H.R.R. are glaring at each other too. So I am thinking of ending our business with Europe after building understanding and a relationship with England and Tres España. Instead, I was hoping to consolidate the opinions of the Kantou lords until the Thirty Years’ War and Mouri Invasion have settled down a bit.”

She had Tsukinowa produce a sign frame that displayed a map stretching from the Chugoku region to the eastern sea. A red ribbon line stretched south from IZUMO, protruded out into the Seto Inland Sea, and circled around the Kii Peninsula.

“The route we are considering travels down along the provisional border between M.H.R.R. and Hexagone Française, travels from west to east around the Kii Arabian Peninsula, and arrives in Mikawa. Following the reverse of the route we used to escape from Mikawa and to the Seto Inland Sea also serves to remind Musashi’s people of the starting line. Of course, this is just wishful thinking.”

“That will not work.”

This comment was made by Yoshiyori who sat across from her. He had apparently been waiting for her to finish speaking and his arms were folded.

“But I take it you know that since you called it wishful thinking.”

“Judge,” agreed Masazumi. Neshinbara’s inspection had already arrived, so she checked it. “It seems M.H.R.R.’s Catholic side has deployed a fleet along their provisional border with Hexagone Française. If we begin fighting Hexagone Française, M.H.R.R.’s fleet will act as observers and a solid defensive line. We can only travel along those provisional national borders, or the borders between principalities and provinces if we’re lucky, so travelling south will expose us to constant attack from both M.H.R.R. and Hexagone Française.”

Also...

“Even once we arrive at the coast of the Seto Inland Sea, the southeastern end of Hexagone Française’s territory and the southwestern end of M.H.R.R.’s run into K.P.A. Italia. Currently, K.P.A. Italia and M.H.R.R. are glaring at each other, so it is a touchy situation. If we travel south, it could trigger a war between those two and bring Hexagone Française into it too. If that happened, the Testament Union would never side with Musashi on anything.”

“Then what will you do?” asked one of the Satou Brothers while adjusting his grip on the long sword he used as a staff.

For an instant, the brothers looked toward Musashi in the night sky.

“Even if you escape IZUMO using gravitational cruising, fleets will be deployed to the border to stop you. Musashi would be able to slip by them at too high an altitude for other ships, but...”

“But if we ‘flee’, we will remain enemies of the Testament Union and Hexagone Française. That would leave the worst possible impression,” agreed Masazumi.

“So if Hexagone Française is going to attack us tomorrow while we have nowhere to go, we must reconcile with them and endure this. Even if we are to leave Europe and travel to Kantou, we must first end this adversarial relationship with Hexagone Française.”

...So she is trying to involve us.

Satomi Yoshiyori gave a silent evaluation of Muashi's vice president. She had declared Musashi would battle Hexagone Française, but at the same time...

...She said that would happen even if they are to leave Europe and travel to Kantou.

In other words, Musashi would not travel to Kantou if they could not endure the attack from Hexagone Française. She was implicitly telling the Kantou forces to help Musashi fight Hexagone Française if they wanted Musashi.

I see, he muttered silently. This has gotten interesting.

Satomi was small, but it was combat focused. They could very well play a role here.

"Then let me ask you this," he said. "What will you do once you endure the attack from Hexagone Française?"

Musashi's vice president's eyebrows rose slightly and she smiled bitterly.

"We do not yet know that is even possible."

"No, but you still must think of the future."

"True enough." She nodded. "We will find whatever safe route we can, travel to Mikawa, and then travel to Kantou."

Before speaking, Masazumi checked the additional information Neshinbara had sent to her sign frame.

"In order to travel to Kantou, there is someone we must speak with. Fortunately, they are sitting right here."

That person was...

"Satou Brothers. That would be you."

“Oh?”

Everyone around her let out voices that sounded both surprised and impressed.

But she did not stop speaking.

“I am sure you know why we would choose to speak with you first.”

The two elderly long-lived men stroked their beards before speaking.

“Ho ho. I see. You are referring to the three great crises of Matsudaira Motonobu who will go on to defeat Hashiba and rule all of the Far East, are you not?”

...Exactly.

Masazumi gave a deep nod.

That was precisely what Neshinbara had just sent her information on.

...The three great crises of Matsudaira Motonobu.

Everyone who lived the Far East, especially Mikawa or Musashi, knew what those were.

“The crisis we will discuss here is the Battle of Mikatagahara.”

That battle was closely related to the Takeda force sitting before her.

And so she looked at the Satou Brothers in turn and nodded.

“According to the Testament, Takeda Shingen’s army fought Matsudaira Motonobu and devastated the Matsudaira army. The defeat occurred in a field to the west of Mt. Fuji which is to the east of Mikawa. The Matsudaira army was routed by the Takeda army and Matsudaira Motonobu only barely managed to escape to his castle and he lost several skilled men. ...That is what happened.”

Neither of the Satou Brothers moved even slightly and their expressions remained unchanged.

And so Masazumi continued speaking.

“So what will you do, Qing-Takeda?” she asked. “If we travel to Kantou via Mikawa, we cannot pass through P.A. Oda to the north, but travelling to the east from Mikawa will take us through Mikatagahara. So what will you do concerning the Battle of Mikatagahara? Will you recreate it or not? If you will, how will you go about it? It is time for some give-and-take, Satou Brothers.”

“The Battle of Mikatagahara? Oh, I know that one, Makiko!”

Sanyou spoke up on the outer edge of Takao, Musashi’s third starboard ship.

“Oh?” Oriotorai held up her Imari porcelain mug. “Okay, Mitsuki, could you give a quick explanation?”

“Well...”

Sanyou looked at the table between her and the other woman. It was created by carving out a thick log. On the table was Sanyou’s Far East meal which contained edamame and tofu and Oriotorai’s M.H.R.R meal which contained sausage and sauerkraut.

...She’s in as good a mood as ever.

Sanyou opened a sign frame which showed the geography with Mt. Fuji to the east.

“Um, Mikatagahara is in Toomi. It refers to the plateau to the west of Mt. Fuji that stretches from the Tenryuu River on the east to Lake Hamana on the west. If you start at Mikawa’s New Nagoya Castle that blew up, it continues for about eighty kilometers southeast.”

“Very good... No, wait. You aren’t one of my students. Mitsuki, you haven’t made a personal statement.”

...How frightening. Do the students of Class Plum feel this tension during all of their classes?

She was impressed, but she swore not to incorporate the idea for her own class.

“Anyway,” she said while pointing at the map of Mt. Fuji. “This territory belonged to Takeda Shingen of Kai, an extremely powerful person at the beginning of the Sengoku period. He grew ill and may have known his death was near, so he seriously worked toward the capital during his final years. In other words, he worked to rule Kyou, the center of the Far East, as the ruler of the powerful Kai Takeda. The nobles, the emperor, and the shoguns live in Kyou, so if someone powerful enough to rule the Far East were to bring Kyou ‘under their protection’, they would essentially rule the Far East.”

And...

“Shingen grew serious and decided to travel west, but he could not bring a large army through the mountainous center of the Far East. He would have to travel along the southern coast, but that would bring him to Mikawa and Mikawa was ruled by Matsudaira who were allies of his rival, the Oda clan. That was when Shingen and Matsudaira began battling each other.”

Me: “Shingen and Matsudaira began battling each other...in bed!?”

When a sign frame suddenly appeared, Oriotorai said “excuse me a moment” and stood up.

She grabbed a nearby deck brush and gave a snap of the wrist.

“We’re being bugged. But from where? Ah, found it.”

A few seconds after she threw it, she suddenly clenched her right fist and another sign frame appeared.

Asama: “U-um, sensei! Did you just throw something like a deck brush our way!?”

...How did they know it was her? Did they recognize her personal style?

At any rate, the older teacher waved her hand and smiled.

“Matsudaira Motonobu took a good beating there, right? Was that when he was preparing for battle but the Takeda army ignored him and walked right past the castle? Didn’t he get mad, pursue them, and end up losing five times as many men?”

“Judge. There are a few different theories concerning that, so everyone is waiting to see how the history recreation will play out. Oh, and when I say ‘everyone’, I mean history-lovers like myself.”

“The war-lovers like me are looking forward to it too.”

“Ah ha ha,” laughed Sanyou because she was unsure how to respond.

She then took a sip from her mug to gain a short respite. Her beer did not actually contain any hops, so it was sweet and inadequate. However, it helped her speak more smoothly, so it was useful when she needed to talk a lot while drinking with someone else.

“Anyway, the overall flow of the battle goes like this.”

Round 1: The Battle of Hitokotozaka

Early Skirmish. Takeda army arrives and advances to Futamata Castle which supports Matsudaira’s supply line. Matsudaira Motonobu heads out for reconnaissance, is spotted, and is not treated well.

↓

Round 2: Battle of Futamata Castle

Preliminary Battle. Futamata Castle resists but is defeated. Surrenders on the condition those inside are spared.

↓

Round 3: Battle of Mikatagahara

Main Battle. When his castle of Hamamatsu Castle was ignored, Matsudaira Motonobu could have left well enough alone, but he pursued and paid for it. His army was routed in only two hours. He fled back to Hamamatsu castle, but the Takeda army swiftly pursued and Motonobu's skilled men sacrificed themselves to protect him.

"I like how you divided it into rounds. Maybe I'll do that from now on."

"Go ahead. Recently, I've gotten hooked on a fighting game based on the Sengoku commanders. Yes, it's called Savage Historical Reign and the opening has Sen no Rikyu give the incomprehensible statement of 'This is a brand new form of etiquette in which the practical Way of Tea is combined with political power.' Rikyu is actually an extremely powerful character. He uses surging tea equipment attacks with incredible force."

"Oh, that game. The idiots in my class play it during class. I think Persona-kun is ranked third in the Far East. He's the indoor type and loves reading."

"Not what you would expect, is it? Ah ha ha ha."

Am I starting to get drunk? wondered Sanyou as she got back on topic.

She first tapped the sign frame from behind to enlarge the writing. She then opened the next page.

"The Battle of Mikatagahara was essentially a triple loss for Matsudaira Motonobu. He fought three times and didn't win even once. And there are a lot of anecdotes and tragic stories about this battle. These are the two most famous ones."

1: While fleeing to Hamamatsu Castle, Matsudaira Motonobu was so scared he crapped himself.

2: After fleeing, Motonobu punished himself by having his men draw a portrait of his enraged expression.

“But...” began Sanyou.

Oriotorai smiled thinly.

“What is it? Does something bother you?”

“Judge.”

Sanyou shook her head, hesitated over whether she should continue, and decided Oriotorai probably already knew.

She made up her mind and spoke.

“There is a problem concerning the history recreation.” She tapped on the text for Round 3. “After all, if the battle is recreated accurately, there must be sacrifices from Matsudaira Motonobu’s men. In this case, that will be Musashi’s student council and chancellor’s officers. That was part of the reason so many of the inherited names related to the Far East and the Matsudaira clan were given to automatons while Lord Motonobu was alive.”

“True.” Oriotorai sipped at her beer and narrowed her eyes. “But no one else has inherited those names since Mikawa blew up, so won’t that mean no one has to be sacrificed?”

“No,” replied Sanyou. “There is one person among those who died in Matsudaira Motonobu’s place.”

She pulled up a list of those who took part in the Battle of Mikatagahara. One of those names was written in red text.

“Naruse Masayoshi. 4th Special Duty Officer Naruze is named after him.”

Naruze could tell everyone was focusing on her.

...*But*...

Focus was not a bad thing if it was friendly and not based in pity. Plus, there was something she had to say.

“My ‘Naruse’ does not come from Naruse Masayoshi. I have no intention of naming myself after or inheriting the name of someone who will die. ...If anyone, I am named after the next generation, Naruse Masanari.”

“Of course,” said the Satou Brother on the right. “Naruse Masayoshi had a younger brother named Masakazu. That brother’s child was named Naruse Masanari and became the next head of the Naruse family. ...I believe Masanari became the head of the Matsudaira clan’s firearms unit.”

Unsurprisingly, the Takedas were well informed. After all, Masanari’s father, Masakazu, once served the Takeda clan and he helped the Takeda clan join with the Matsudaira clan after their destruction.

“My presence allows us to say Naruse Masakazu was on Musashi. That means you can take refuge on Musashi if anything major happens to the Takeda clan, right?”

“Testament.”

The Satou Brothers readily admitted it. That fact was a reminder that they were on the Far Eastern side and also a major member of the Testament Union.

“Judge. I am glad you are honest. But to be honest, I had not thought about it that much. Margot’s...that is, Naito’s family apparently named themselves after some Naitou family during her parent’s generation, but Margot and I have our own view. We say her name comes from Naitou Shinjuku, land belonging to the Naitou family that initially made up Matsudaira’s firearms unit.”

“?”

Masazumi tilted her head when she heard that.

“She couldn’t be named after the Naitou family themselves?”

“Judge. The member of the Naitou family who the firearms unit was left to was named Naitou Kiyonari, but he was a judge known as the Kantou Magistrate and well...Urquiaga is already named after Kiyonari.”

“Oh, so Urquiaga’s Kiyonari comes from Kantou Magistrate Naitou Kiyonari. ...How did he get from there to an older sister loving interrogator?”

“Try not to think about what the crazy ones do, Masazumi.”

For an instant, Masazumi stared at Naruze in disbelief, but Naruze ignored it, sighed, and continued speaking.

“Anyway, we wanted to avoid doubling up on a name. The Naitou family owned the land the firearms training ground was on, so it was known as Naitou Shinjuku. We made it so Margot is named after that land. We aren’t Shinto and we give little focus to the Far Eastern side of things, so we thought that would be enough.”

“I see.”

Naruze had a sudden thought as she watched Masazumi nod.

...Oh, this must be the first time she heard that.

She hoped she had not made Masazumi feel alienated, but she did not try to cheer her up either. Instead, the Satou Brother on the right spoke up.

“Takeda has a lot of Naitou clan members and you have firearms users. If the people of Takeda join you using the name of Naruse, she can name herself after one of them.”

“No need. Naito just has to become my wife. That will resolve the surname issue.”

Everyone turned toward her and clearly wanted to say something.

...*That was a close one!*

Masazumi began to sweat while feeling very thankful the divine chat had not been set to broadcast their voices. If it had been, that comment would have been sent all over the place.

...*The pope-chancellor would never have remained silent!!*

In a dark sanctuary, Innocentius pressed his ear against a cross-style *cornice firma*.

“Huh? It’s just making a strange noise. And after I went to such trouble to have a spy in Hexagone Française bug that odd meeting. I can’t hear it at all.”

He tried to fix the *cornice firma* by hitting it while Galileo tilted his head behind him.

“You are being incredibly immature, former boy.”

“What? Pope or not, everyone loves doing things in secret like this! Afterwards, I can surprise them with a divine *posta* saying I bugged their meeting. But not if I can’t hear anything they say, hm?”

“Are you sure you are not confusing the means with the objective?”

“Don’t say that.”

Innocentius took a breath and looked out the sanctuary window.

Several long forms were visible in the eastern sky.

“So we’ve finally put together a formation to defend against M.H.R.R. and Hashiba’s army that’s heading south. Tensions are rising, but we still need to take a break sometimes. And Musashi’s activities are perfect for that. Will they recreate history or take a unique path? Either way, we can’t say anything about their situation.”

“Are you jealous, former boy?”

“As a Catholic, I should be jealous of the troubles they’re going through, right? I personally prefer to avoid as much effort as I can, though.”

Innocentius then turned to face Galileo.

“Anyway, I hear Hashiba has taken an odd action. How about you tell me what that’s all about, hm?”

While Masazumi observed the curious looks everyone was turning toward Naruze, she went over some information. She had Tsukinowa display it on a sign frame and looked over the texts Neshinbara had sent her.

...*Huh?*

She realized something odd about what the Satou Brothers had said.

Wondering what it meant, she avoided looking at the two old men and sent a message to Neshinbara.

Vice President: “It flowed so smoothly that I didn’t notice until now, but can I ask you about something?”

Novice: “Go right ahead. What is it?”

Masazumi typed into the divine chat.

Vice President: “I overlooked it, but something odd happened earlier.”

Namely...

Vice President: “Why did the Satou Brothers help us out concerning Naruze?”

Novice: “What do you mean?”

It had been subtle enough that she had overlooked it at first, so it would not get through to him unless she explained it. She wanted time to explain it properly, so she held her right palm out toward those around her.

“Excuse me a moment.”

...This is how Futayo did it, right?

“Thinking time!”

Immediately afterwards, the world fell silent.

Masazumi gained silence.

The commotion from the drunkenness behind her ended in an instant and she heard a single plate break.

“Oh...”

“Sh.”

...Who just said sh!?

Houjou Ujinao cleared her throat to Masazumi’s right, Yoshiyori seemed not to understand as he sat across from her, and the Satou Brothers were trying and failing to smile politely next to Yoshiyori.

Masazumi had no idea why they were reacting this way.

Me: “Ahh... Now you’ve done it.”

Vice President: “D-done what!? Futayo does this all the time!”

Tonbokiri: “Not even I am this skilled at catching the enemy off guard.”

Asama: “H-how can you all be so cruel!? Masazumi is desperately trying to make us laugh, so you need to be more understanding! Of course, no one is perfect, so we do not always do what we need to do!”

Almost Everyone: “What are you even trying to say!?”

...Is she really a shrine maiden who makes Shinto prayers?

At any rate, Masazumi decided to prioritize what she had to say.

Vice President: “Neshinbara, are you listening?”

Novice: “Eh? Oh, yes. Go ahead.”

He did not sound very motivated, so she sent her messages to everyone.

Vice President: “Listen. The Satou Brothers of Qing-Takeda said they would not kill Naruze at the Battle of Mikatagahara because they needed her when Takeda would join Matsudaira after Takeda’s destruction.”

Uqui: “What is odd about that? It is certainly convenient for us.”

Vice President: “Exactly. But this give-and-take itself is odd on a fundamental level.”

After all...

Vice President: “When the Takeda clan is destroyed, they just have to absorb it into the Qing side. Yoshitsune rules both Qing and Takeda, so there’s no meaning in joining Matsudaira. With that in mind, why would they say they were going to do so?”

What did it mean?

“Now that you mention it, that is odd. Do you understand it, Adele?”

Adele was eating sake lees ice cream for dessert and her shoulders trembled when Asama asked her that question.

“Eh!? Oh, um... Th-the secretary can answer that.”

Adele and everyone else turned toward the secretary.

At some point, that secretary had taken up position on the edge of the terrace. He was leaning over toward IZUMO.

“Ah, over there, Michizane, over there. Yatsufusa is there, right? Get a good photo! ...Ahh, I knew it. Sorry, Michizane. You’re a civil official, so your photography ability wasn’t strengthened. The backlight of the night is too much, is it? Okay, then let’s head to the front deck! We can try for a good angle from there! I really want some data on Murasamemaru!”

The secretary isn’t going to be any help, thought Adele. But what are we supposed to do?

Masazumi’s question was worth thinking about.

If Qing-Takeda did not need to rely on Matsudaira, why were they acting as if they would rely on Matsudaira after Takeda’s destruction?

...Are they trying to make us feel obligated to them?

She felt that was close, but something still bothered her. If it was that simple, they would be able to create an even greater sense of obligation.

...For example, they could agree to settle the entire Battle of Mikatagahara without actually fighting.

As the leader during the armada battle, Adele understood just how much easier it would be to end the battle with a discussion. However, it appeared they wanted to go through with the battle itself but wanted to keep it minor enough that no one would die.

“That means...”

There was something there, but what?

She could not find the words to describe it, but she had a feeling she understood.

...If they have no need for the give-and-take, why are they doing this?

But then...

...No, wait. That isn't it.

There was something wrong about that line of thinking.

She was having difficulty finding the words because she was thinking about it wrong. To find the words, she had to destroy her assumptions. And she realized how to do that.

“U-um, so... Simply put, they *do not need any kind of give-and-take with us*, right? Even if Takeda is destroyed, they still have Qing.”

“That’s right,” affirmed Asama. “Masazumi’s question was why someone like that would make this deal with us.”

Asama folded her arms in thought and her folded arms pushed up her breasts and altered their shape.

...Nwoh.

The terms “tsunami” and “vast ocean” entered Adele’s mind.

And...

“Ah!”

She had realized why Qing-Takeda had proposed this deal.

“I know the answer! I’m sure of it!”

Chapter 12: Owner of a Large Place

CHAPTER 12

"Owner of a Large Place"



It's bigger
Always better?

Point Allocation (Good Question)

Is bigger

Always better?

Point Allocation (Good Question)

“I know the answer!” shouted Adele while staring at Asama’s breasts. She moved her hands about as she tried to explain. “U-um, Qing-Takeda...doesn’t have to go through the give-and-take process with us!”

Asama tilted her head.

“Well, yes, but then why are they giving us this deal?”

Oh, no. I messed up my explanation, thought Adele as she frantically shook her head.

“That isn’t what I meant! The foundation of their thought process is different! This is the leeway of those with plenty!”

Adele made a gesture to indicate large breasts.

“In other words...!”

“U-um, what was that just now?”

“Just ignore it! Please ignore it. ...Anyway, Qing-Takeda doesn’t care how much they give us. After all, they are a powerful nation with enough wealth to give up some of it. From their perspective, this isn’t an issue of asking why they should go through with the give-and-take despite not having to. They have so much that they have no real reason not to give us whatever we want.”

Adele stared at Asama’s breasts as she spoke.

“That is the breast way to explain this!”

Almost Everyone: Beginning deliberation.

“H-huh!? Did I say something wrong!?”

Asama sent Masazumi a summary of what Adele had said.

...So that's it!

Vice President: “I was thinking of this on too small a scale.”

Me: “C'mon, Seijun. Don't get so down just because you've got a small chest. It'll be fine. If you resist making any weird jokes, they'll get bigger. By about 5 mm.”

She decided she had to beat him to the ground later.

...But what is going on here?

Was this really a negotiation?

...They're planning to give me whatever I ask for.

The survival of the Matsudaira clan was riding on the Battle of Mikatagahara. Qing-Takeda was planning to aid them with that fear and with the history recreation of those who die in the battle.

This was the leeway of a monarch. But was it narrow-minded to feel there was an ulterior motive behind it?

She did not know.

But she did have a thought.

...Right now, I need to be more careful than anyone else from Musashi. Even if everyone else gives into them, I can't.

“May I ask a hypothetical question?”

Normally, she would never receive an affirmative response. After all, a negotiation was an effort to draw out information. The process of give-and-take was necessary for that.

However...

“Go right ahead,” said the left Satou Brother.

They were going to allow anything.

...In that case...

Masazumi made up her mind and straightened up.

“Are you not afraid of interference from the Testament Union?”

“Oh? And what can the Testament Union do to Qing-Takeda?” Before she could say anything further, the right Satou Brother spoke up. He shrugged and gave a small laugh. “How many ships are there which can travel the shortest distance from Europe to Kantou and the other eastern nations? Mt. Fuji acts as a natural stronghold. There is the Tian Shan corridor to the west and the Sagarmatha corridor to the south, but the only ships which can travel through them with enough speed for a military operation are Musashi and...any ships that have recently been commissioned or modified.”

“What about Sviet Rus to the north? Russia is a zealous Tsirhc member of the Testament Union.”

“Sviet Rus cannot act during the winter and they must pass through the mountains if they do act, so we can predict their routes. We merely need to deploy a defensive line if they attack. In other words, the Testament Union cannot interfere in Qing-Takeda’s business. We can accept the advantages of belonging to the Testament Union and ignore the disadvantages. And none of this restricts our actions as a nation.”

To sum up...

“We are a monarch and we are free.”

A free monarch, are you? thought Masazumi.

After all, there was one thing the Satou Brothers were intentionally not mentioning.

...P. A. Oda.

If one pictured the actual map of the Far East powers, the Ottoman P. A. Oda stretched out between the European Testament Union nations and Qing-Takeda. That prevented those European Testament Union nations from easily entering the east.

...But it is true that Qing-Takeda is a powerful nation.

“I see,” said Masazumi with a nod.

...I’m glad the Satou Brothers’ words aren’t being transmitted live.

If they were, it would appear she had helped Qing-Takeda advertise their confidence and power. If she made a mistake like that on Testament Union land, Musashi could be seen as opposing the Testament Union.

...I need to be careful.

She folded her arms while making sure her inner thoughts did not show on her face.

“ ... ”

But she realized that action pointed to her own caution and cowardice, so she stopped.

“An interesting stance.”

She placed her hands behind her back, let her legs hang down, and forcibly created a firm posture.

“Walsingham, give these two something to eat. I wish to speak with them further.”

“Oh?” The Satou Brothers nodded and raised their right or left hand.

“I will have the yuba sashimi.”

“I will have the superior yuba sashimi.”

“Why you...!”

Masazumi waited for the two old men to calm down as they began pulling on each other’s beards. Their plates arrived and Masazumi received a matcha frappe in a teacup.

She turned around and found Walsingham and Jonson raising a hand toward her.

...They keep helping us out.

It was likely because they wanted to make sure a future King of England really did come from Musashi.

She nodded toward them, turned back toward the Satou Brothers, took a breath, and took a bite of the matcha frappe.

“I would like to ask something, Satou Brothers.”

She continued on with a second question.

...Normally they would refuse, saying I only got one question.

“Go ahead,” they both agreed at once.

And so she asked her question. She used a gesture to instruct Tsukinowa to type up the question as she spoke.

Vice President: “The opposition between Matsudaira and Takeda leads to the Battle of Mikatagahara which is a great crisis for the Matsudaira clan. Would it be possible to safely settle that battle via a discussion?”

Mitotsudaira gasped at Masazumi’s question.

And she was not the only one. Everyone at the separate table stopped moving.

“Huh? Where is the chancellor?”

“Hm? Earlier, it looked like he was removing the chain attached to his leg. ...Oh, the shackle and his pants are down here.”

“The chancellor slithered off toward the back earlier.”

That worried everyone, but they could only leave it up to fate.

...We can only pray that nothing bad happens.

With that thought, Mitotsudaira looked back toward the sign frame.

...Can we settle the Battle of Mikatagahara with a discussion?

That would be an incredible plus for the Matsudaira clan and Musashi as a whole.

Naito seemed to understand that because she nodded with her eyebrows lying flat and spoke.

“If that happened, the student council and chancellor’s officers’ approval rating would go up. And Ga-chan would definitely draw a doujinshi about Seijun. ...It would probably be titled Sexual Relations with Qing.”

“Isn’t that the obvious title?”

Everyone fell silent and glared at Mitotsudaira.

...O-oh, no!

The next thing she knew, Asama was beckoning to her from the other table.

“I will purify the filth coming from your actions, so hurry.”

“Judge.” She stood up and spoke to no one in particular. “But this is strange.”

“Heh heh heh. Vegetable lover, is something bothering you about our poor politician desperately trying to keep up with that powerful nation?”

Mitotsudaira hated how that girl would say those things in a tone that showed she fully understood. Mitotsudaira’s shoulders drooped and she stood next to Asama and Kimi’s table.

“This is a powerful nation that is only giving and not taking. Do you truly understand what that means? Why is a powerful nation a powerful nation? That is what makes this so dangerous.”

Everyone’s sign frames suddenly shook.

Tsukinowa had sent something from IZUMO. The messages contained the Satou Brothers’ words dictated by the slightly awkward voice of the Mouse.

Sato Right: “Yess. When it commes to the Batle of Mikatagara...”

Everyone stiffened as they waited to see what Qing would say.

Sato Left: “Iff you do not wish too go through with itt, that is finne.”

They said it was not necessary.

As Masazumi watched, the Satou Brothers both spread their arms.

“Qing-Takeda will also aid with securing the Logismoi Oplo and providing backup. That extra power has caused some troublesome trade conflicts with the Testament Union.”

“How kind of you. Is this also part of Lady Yoshitsune’s authority?”

Masazumi took a bite of her frappe.

...If we do settle the history recreation with a discussion, will the Testament Union consider us the ones at fault for suggesting it?

But if they travelled to the Far Eastern reservation of Edo in Kantou, the Testament Union would be unable to pursue because their main force was in Europe. That led Masazumi to her conclusion.

“I see. In that case, let me give an answer to these hypotheticals. You have offered to provide a favorable interpretation of the death of the one inheriting the name Naruse, you have offered to handle Mikatagahara with a discussion, and you have offered to help us secure the Logismo Oplo.”

If Qing-Takeda helped in all those things, the Matsudaira clan, Musashi, and the Far East would see peace.

They would be able to anticipate the future developments around Edo and, more importantly, the Musashi could be repaired in Edo. Once that was complete, they could use Edo as a base while negotiating with the other nations over the Logismo Oplo.

Everything would go well, and that was why Masazumi gave her answer.

“I would like for you to forget about all of those offers.”

Kimi laughed quietly while resting her head on her hands.

“You are an excellent woman, Masazumi. Yes. You must bluntly reject that kind of man.”

“Um, what just happened?” frantically asked Asama.

The first response came via a divine transmission from Urquiaga.

Uqui: “That is what a powerful nation like Qing-Takeda is after, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” continued Adele.

She exchanged a glance and a nod with Mitotsudaira who stood near the corridor.

“They are a major power,” she said. “Qing controls the Kantou region and they are currently the largest nation, so this was a natural decision.”

“Judge.” Mitotsudaira gave a sigh of relief. “Qing-Takeda wants one thing. Namely...”

Vice President: “Qing-Takeda intends to absorb Musashi as one of their vassal states in Kantou.”

Masazumi spoke while lightly tapping her teacup with her frappe spoon.

“I had difficulty thinking about this because it was on too great a scale, but I finally understand. The Battle of Mikatagahara, aiding the retrieval of the Logismoi Oplo, making an enemy of the Testament Union, and the damage to the Musashi are all meaningless to Qing-Takeda. After all, you have the national power to survive those things and you have land that is outside of the Testament Union’s reach.” She tapped the teacup once more. “Musashi is both the ruler of the Far East and the ship on which Matsudaira’s monarch lives. If you took us in, Qing-Takeda would essentially become the king of the Far East. No matter how much damage you took, that would more than make up for it.”

“Do you really think we would trap you like that?”

“You have the Battle of Mikatagahara.” Masazumi shrugged and spoke cheerfully once more. “If we did not agree to join you, you could begin that battle and ‘accidentally’ destroy us completely, couldn’t you? Then you would set up a replacement, surround Edo, support Edo as the ruler of the Far East while the Testament Union could not touch you, and insist it is part of the history recreation. ...The Testament Union would likely create a new Matsudaira, but the

next inheritance of the name would be carried out in Qing and Qing would have control of Edo which will become Matsudaira land. That would allow Qing-Takeda's Chancellor and President Yoshitsune to rule the world as the ruler of the Far East to continue on after Yuan and Qing."

Qing-Takeda was so powerful that this statement was not an exaggeration. And they also appeared generous in doing so.

They were a major power.

They had history, skilled people, and a population and national power that were supported by their vast land. As such, they had the conceit to assume they would not be destroyed and that they would continue to be a major power in every era.

Musashi was no comparison. They were different down to the way they thought.

But, thought Masazumi before speaking.

"Those are the thoughts of an emperor."

"Yes." Putting it to words had fully convinced her. "You do not think of your nation as being a part of the world. Your nation *is* the world and the other nations are merely renting space here. ...That is how you think."

The Satou Brothers looked quietly at her.

And so she continued on.

"The nation of Qing-Takeda can think of itself as the owner of the entire world because of Lady Yoshitsune. As a directly descended member of the long-lived race, she will live long after this. In other words, her empire cannot disappear. As such, no matter how much the other nations cause problems and assert themselves, they will eventually be absorbed by the nation led by Yoshitsune, the proper owner of the world. ...That is how Qing-Takeda thinks."

And so...

“To you, the rest of the world is nothing but the cute children of your emperor. Even if the Far East and Musashi create a slight burden, it will only last an instant when compared to the lifespan of an empire. Even if we cause some slight ‘mischief’, that will create more debts we must eventually repay. And then the Far East will be yours.” Masazumi paused before beginning to speak once more. “Musashi refuses to let that happen. The ruler of the Far East is Matsudaira Motonobu’s successor. We do not need a patron and we will not be a puppet state.”

That was her decision, but it would also be Musashi’s decision.

She understood the reason for this rejection and she understood how powerful Qing-Takeda was.

...But I still have to say it.

As the representative of the Far East, she could not make a decision that would make them a puppet state in the future.

...During all our past dealings with the Testament Union, the different generations of chancellors and student council presidents withstood it all. There was meaning in what my father’s generation did.

They had saved Horizon at Mikawa with the intention of freeing themselves from all that submission.

If someone now kindly suggested new submission with peace used as bait, she could not go along with it.

“That is why I must refuse your offer.”

“Oh?” said both the Satou Brothers simultaneously. They then asked a question at the exact same moment. “Then perhaps we shall not hold back during the Battle of Mikatagahara.”

“Let me make one thing very clear.”

Masazumi was concerned by how Naruze was drawing up a storyboard with incredible speed next to her, but she continued speaking to the Satou Brothers.

“Naruze here is not Naruse Masayoshi who died at the Battle of Mikatagahara. As she said, she is Naruse Masanari of the next generation,” she said. “The other nations have no reason to insist on any Matsudaira deaths during the Battle of Mikatagahara.”

“...Masazumi.”

Masazumi saw Naruze stop drawing and turn toward her. Naruze looked her in the eye with a blank expression.

“Why are you trying to show off?”

“Don’t worry about it.”

“I have to worry about it. If you say something like that, I have to redo this entire storyboard!”

“That’s what you care about!?”

Despite Masazumi’s shout, Naruze’s brain had already gone off in that direction.

“Wh-what should I do? I almost made it to the end of ‘Sexual☆Relations: Qing’ where you do your best against Qing-Takeda’s representatives. Ahh! I have to change the ending now! I can’t just have Asama handle them all in the end! Will I really be able to finish drawing it before we arrive in Edo!?”

Gold Mar: “So close. I almost had the title.”

Asama: “Masazumi! Arrest her! Use your student council privileges and arrest her!”

...Wait. All of you wait. Calm down. As a student council officer, I want to avoid arresting one of our own. That would seriously affect the public opinion of us. Of

course, there's that one idiot I'm always having to arrest, but he's a special case. Not a single citizen would count that.

But then a belated thought came to her.

...What am I supposed to do now?

The flow of conversation had made it unavoidable, but she was making an enemy of Qing-Takeda.

...What am I supposed to do? What am I supposed to do?

She looked forward while thinking as hard as she could.

...What's this?

Something new was happening in front of her. Satomi Yoshiyori was bending over a bit.

He was suppressing laughter.

And the Satou Brothers next to him turned toward him.

“Young Satomi, if you wish to laugh, then laugh. It takes more than that to disgrace Qing-Takeda.”

“I apologize, Satou Brothers. I didn't expect you to be so bluntly rejected.”

“Neither did I,” agreed Houjou Ujinao across from Naruze. She gave a forced sigh and continued. “Even if they claim to be fierce warriors, it seems that is all the forest long-lived can do. The demonic type can actually use brute force, so I can see why more of us remain.”

“Kh.”

Both of the Satou Brothers' cheeks stiffened and they squeezed the long sword scabbards they used as staffs.

Wait, wait, wait, thought Masazumi as she watched Yoshiyori take a breath and rest his elbows on his lap.

He then turned toward her and spoke.

“It looks like you will be reaching your decision soon, so I would like to speak for the Satomi clan without hiding anything. We have only one demand for Musashi.”

Yoshiyori called it a demand rather than a negotiation, so Masazumi focused on him.

However...

...?

She realized Ujinao was nodding as well.

“Can I view this as a demand from both your nations?”

Yoshiyori and Ujinao both nodded in response.

Wondering what this was about, Masazumi went ahead and asked the question in her mind.

“What do Satomi and Houjou wish to demand of Musashi?”

“It is a simple matter,” said Yoshiyori. “We wish for Musashi to obtain enough power to gain our approval.”

“Don’t you agree, ‘Musashi’-san?”

Below the night sky and on the front deck of Okutama, a middle-aged man sat on a bench and drank from a sake cup. Next to him, the automaton named “Musashi” had a dozen sake bottles hanging from a special magazine case.

“Agree with what, Sakai-sama? Over.”

The sign frame next to Sakai showed the divine transmissions that Masazumi was sending those related to the student council and the members of Class 3-Plum. Whenever they heard the sound of an anteater’s paws typing, more text would appear.

“Masazumi-kun’s Mouse still lacks experience. This stage is always the cutest, don’t you agree?”

“Let us return to the topic at hand, Sakai-sama. What do Satomi and Houjou mean when they say we must obtain enough power to gain their approval? I believe we demonstrated our power by winning the armada battle. Over.”

“Don’t get your feelings hurt, ‘Musashi’-san. No one is saying the Musashi has no power.”

Sakai pulled a kiseru out of his pocket and turned toward “Musashi” who held a torch lit from a nearby brazier.

“Are you angry, ‘Musashi’-san?”

“Let me see your kiseru. Over.”

“Oh, whoops.”

Sakai handed over the kiseru and “Musashi” used her gravity control to cause some sparks to pour down into it. A slight crimson glow came from the kiseru, but it quickly settled down.

“What an odd smell. This is not just tobacco. Over.”

“Mitotsudaira gave it to me. It has a lot of fragrant herbs in it.

Sakai rolled his shoulders around and adjusted his position. He glanced in the direction of the unseen eastern nations and slowly spoke.

“Anyway, Satomi has someone amazing as their chancellor. Last time, it was an older long-lived girl, but now the young man who was her aide holds the position. I believe I spoke with him briefly during last year’s circle around the Far East.”

“He possesses Murasamemaru and Yatsufusa, correct? The Testament descriptions seem to have some interesting aspects at times. The descriptions at the beginning of each era provide some comments on the era as a whole. That allows us to make some estimations about what happens after the point at which the Testament ends. Over.”

“Judge.” Sakai nodded toward the eastern night sky. “That is why there is a faction that says the Testament has more written but we have lost track of our destiny and a faction that says those comments are just another entry and there is nothing proving our destiny ever continued past that. ...Part of the comments for the Edo period said a story was written about the Satomi clan which involves the protection of eight dogs and a spiritual sword known as Murasamemaru. They half-forcibly claimed it to be historical fact and created that divine weapon.”

He turned around and looked to the west. The lights of IZUMO were not directly visible from here, but he could see them illuminating the clouds and sky from below.

“Three weapons are passed down to each of the Satomi clan’s chancellors: Yatsufusa, the high-output god of war with the eight jewel engine, the small Murasamemaru which acts as a controller for the god of war, and the large Murasamemaru which is the god of war’s cannon sword. Actually creating something that was expected to remain nothing but a story would probably excite someone like Neshinbara.”

However...

“The Satomi clan built up great power for such a small nation by focusing on their gods of war with their Eight Dog gods of war at the base. All they have are castles for protection and gods of war. That is why they cannot invade anyone, but they can defend well enough and cause enough confusion to be a problem for Houjou and their fleet controlled by automatons.”

“You seem to enjoy childish discussions of war. Over.”

“What’s wrong with that? I like situations that look like something straight out of a simulation game.” Sakai breathed in the smoke, held it in his cheek, and finally blew it out once more. “But the chancellor of that small nation is now telling us to gain more power. ...That’s something that no one on the Musashi can just come out and say.”

After all...

“He’s essentially saying that we lack the power we need.”

It was “Musashi” who spoke next. She did so with a tilt of the head.

“Why would Satomi go out of the way to tell us that? Over.”

“Oh, that’s easy.” Sakai breathed out more smoke and his white breath dissolved into the darkness. “Masazumi-kun explained earlier why Qing is a powerful nation, right? A powerful nation cannot lose anything, cannot be stopped, and will not run out no matter how many people they lose. You understand, don’t you?” he asked. “Musashi won the armada battle. We destroyed their flagship and you could honestly say that the European forces have no warships which can take on the Musashi, one on one. ...Does that make you happy, ‘Musashi’-san?”

“You are merely stating the obvious. Over.”

“You weren’t supposed to be a warship, so you should probably be a little concerned about this... Anyway, even though we won, what is the Musashi doing now? In fact, what has it been doing for the past two weeks?”

“Receiving repairs.” “Musashi” paused there and nodded. “I see. I understand now. Satomi and Houjou’s chancellors are saying they have seen that we have the power necessary to win a battle.”

And so...

“And so they wish for us to gain the power necessary to *continually fight without rest against a powerful nation that cannot be destroyed*. Over.”

That’s impossible, thought Masazumi. *Musashi is not a nation with productive land*.

It had defensive abilities and its gravitational cruising, but its abilities were based around those of a transport ship.

It was a ship, so it could *fight a battle* but not *wage war*.

...We do not have vast land and many strongholds like the ground-based nations, so we cannot fight a long-term war while moving from stronghold to stronghold.

Musashi was no different from a single castle or city in the other nations.

Those other nations could strategically choose to abandon or fortify those places, they could regroup their army, and they could buy time or wear down an enemy by having them stick to that one stronghold.

But Musashi was just one place. Moving each ship independently would not divide the battlefield of Musashi into more than one battlefield.

But Yoshiyori spoke before her.

“You have to worry about Qing-Takeda, P. A. Oda, and possibly a large alliance created from the Testament Union nations. If you cannot constantly handle all of them from now on, we can negotiate with you as a powerful ship but not as an equal nation.”

After all...

“Due to the history recreation of the Testament descriptions, the eastern nations – especially those in Kantou – are more heavily affected by the actions of the Far East than by the other parts of the world. However, small nations like us cannot

oppose the Testament Union as blatantly as Qing-Takeda. And if Qing-Takeda tried to absorb us, we would be unable to withstand it.”

“And so you are asking us to become a nation that can stand equal to Qing-Takeda?”

They were not being asked to simply negotiate with a nation that had land, productive power, manpower, and countless strongholds.

“You want us to be able to win if we fought them head on?”

She felt that was a ridiculous request, but Yoshiyori gave his answer.

“Correct. We wish for you to obtain at least that much power.”

“Why?” asked Masazumi while feeling the conversation accelerate.

...Why in the world is he so earnest about this!?

How much was the ship named Musashi supposed to bear?

...And he acts like he wants us to do it right away.

“Why? Why do you demand that Musashi strengthen itself so quickly?”

“Because of the Battle of Mikatagahara.”

She saw the Satou Brothers’ expressions vanish upon hearing Satomi Yoshiyori’s words.

The brothers’ shoulders began to tremble and their eyebrows rose. Their sharp gazes turned toward Satomi Yoshiyori and they gnashed their teeth.

“Damn you!”

Ignoring them, Satomi Yoshiyori spoke calmly.

“Listen, Vice President of Musashi.”

She nodded and he slowly continued.

“There is a reason why the Battle of Mikatagahara came to an end during the Age of the Gods. ...There is a horribly simple reason why the weak Matsudaira clan was not destroyed by the much more powerful Takeda clan.”

Namely...

“During the battle, Takeda Shingen died of illness.”

Satomi Yoshiyori felt Murasamemaru tremble as if throbbing at his waist.

Murasamemaru was the controller for Yatsufusa's eight jewel engine and there were two of them: one for Yatsufusa and one for him. To move Yatsufusa, a link had to be made between the two of them.

...The eight jewel engine moves in response to people's virtues.

Benevolence, righteousness, etiquette, knowledge, loyalty, honesty, filial piety, and sibling piety. It would only activate when used by someone who possessed all those things.

...Which virtue throbbed just now?

He thought, but he was aware that he was choosing the proper path.

“Takeda Shingen's death led the Takeda clan down the path to destruction. His son, Katsuyori, was a skilled commander, but his men had little trust in him. ...And he fought the Oda clan at the Battle of Nagashino.”

According to the Testament descriptions, the Battle of Nagashino would proclaim the Oda clan's superiority to the world.

“Takeda's cavalry was thoroughly broken by the Oda anti-cavalry preparations and rapid firing from the great number of guns Oda had brought in. A lot of their powerful commanders died and Katsuyori took responsibility by committing

suicide. As a result, the Takeda clan scattered and the remnants were hunted down in what became known as Takeda hunts.”

And...

“Houjou and Matsudaira ended up obtaining the land they left behind. Oda actually partially abandoned Kantou, but...do you understand?”

Yoshiyori stared directly in the eyes of Musashi’s vice president and he opened his mouth to speak some more.

But before he could, Houjou Ujinao spoke quietly.

“P. A. Oda does nothing to their eventual enemy of Matsudaira? They stand on the front line and oppose the Testament Union just as much as...no, more than Qing-Takeda. If need be, they have shown they will abandon the history recreation. Do you really think P. A. ODA will do nothing as Matsudaira attempts to acquire the vast empty land left by Takeda?” Ujinao turned her closed eyes toward the eastern sky. “Vice President of Musashi, Musashi’s enemy is not Qing-Takeda. It is P. A. Oda. After all, Qing-Takeda’s Takeda force will be destroyed by P. A. Oda once the Battle of Mikatagahara is over. After their power is torn away and stolen like that, how much can we rely on them?”

“Damn both of you!” shouted the Satou Brothers. They looked back and forth between Yoshiyori and Houjou Ujinao. “How much do you think you have benefited from the protection and care of Qing-Takeda!”

“Okay then,” said Yoshiyori.

...It would be best not to provoke them too much.

Satomi would act based on logic and there was something he had to say to indicate that.

“Tell me this, Satou Brothers. Why did you agree to settle the Battle of Mikatagahara with a discussion and attempt to take in Musashi?”

Ujinao turned toward the Satou Brothers as if in agreement.

“You want to prevent any losses to your Takeda forces during the Battle of Mikatagahara so you can prepare for Nagashino afterwards. And once the Takeda clan is destroyed, you will have an easier time negotiating with P. A. Oda and the Testament Union if you are protecting Musashi, the ruler of the Far East. You wish to use the allure of controlling the Far East via Musashi to make them fight each other.” Ujinao laughed lightly. “Qing-Takeda is afraid of losing its Far Eastern half.”

As soon as Ujinao finished speaking, the Satou Brothers took action.

They stood up while clenching the long swords they used as staffs.

“...!”

Masazumi found herself unable to react to any of it.

She could only tell that Naruze had stood up in response to the Satou Brothers’ action.

And the next thing she knew...

...Eh?

The Satou Brothers, Yoshiyori, and Ujinao had all stood up and had lowered a bit into fighting stances. But Masazumi noticed a certain fact.

...They aren’t moving?

They had all stopped. They were not moving. The initial action of the battle had been cut off.

Everyone had taken a fighting stance, but no one was moving. The reason for this slowly arrived.

“Satou Brothers.”

It was a female voice. Masazumi sensed a presence approaching from the restaurant behind her.

“Your frightened stance is different from mine. And the rest of you. Don’t think for a second that my thoughts are the same as these old men.”

It was Yoshitsune.

Chapter 13: Great King of the Location

CHAPTER 13

"Great King of the Location"



What is all alone
Even when people gather?
Point Allocation (Individual)

What is all alone

Even when people gather?

Point Allocation (Individual)

“Would you call this easy to mess up, difficult, or simple, ‘Musashi’-san?”

Sakai spoke from a bench on the deck at the bow of Okutama, but “Musashi” only tilted her head next to him. She placed some pyrethrum behind him to keep mosquitos away before speaking.

“Sakai-sama, what is your opinion? I believe you know Chancellor Yoshitsune of Qing-Takeda. Over.”

“Judge. That’s right. We had some non-combat negotiations while I was dealing with that idiot Innocentius. She wasn’t supposed to attack from the east during my generation, so I said I’d cry if she did. On the other hand, Ii and Sakakibara created a strong trade connection and opened a path to the Houjou region.” He rested his head on his hand. “Then I was sent to the Edo region before coming to Musashi. Kantou is their land, remember? So I dealt with them a fair amount. When their mobile city came by, we would open a market for trade and a 100 yen bazaar.”

“Is she a pacifist? Over.”

“No, she does whatever she feels like. It’s all based on the continuing existence of her and those around her. When you live for centuries, you learn what you can and can’t do. With that and a clear line between control and subordination, the way you think changes. ‘Musashi’-san, how old are you this year? Thirty?”

“Judge. My thought circuits are cleaned daily, so I am zero years old. Over.”

“Oh, dear. And I always thought you were older than me.”

“Are you implying that you are less than thirty, Sakai-sama? Now let us get back to Yoshitsune-sama. Over.”

The concern in “Musashi’s” voice caused Sakai to nod.

“Judge. Her basis for ethics and for judging the value of life is different from other people. During the centuries, she has seen the advantages and disadvantages of people’s lives and deaths. When her brother Yoritomo inherited the name of Sanetomo three generations later, she forcibly carried out Sanetomo’s assassination that was on the verge of being settled with an interpretation. It was quite gruesome.” He shook his head with a bitter smile. “No, she’d get mad if I said it that way. But that is one way to live. No matter who dies and no matter what others say, as long as you and those around you continue on, it does not matter. As long as you rule in the end, nothing else matters. And even if you are not...”

He exhaled some smoke and reached for the sake cup he had been drinking from.

“As a member of the long-lived race’s direct line, others will always die before she does. That is why it does not matter what others do. This is the difference between a small nation and a large nation, but it is also the difference between a human and the long-lived race. That is why she is a bit different. She’s probably laughing and enjoying herself over at IZUMO, but I suspect she is actually quite calm. It makes an old man like me want to have her predict my future based on my personality. She probably keeps all the fun stuff with her.”

“I have determined that you seem to like her quite a bit. Over.”

“Are you jealous, ‘Musashi’-san?”

“An automaton cannot experience jealousy. Did you hit your head? Over.”

“I’m not sure.” Sakai tilted his head. “But Yoshitsune is sure to say some crazy things, so Masazumi-kun needs to be on her toes.”

With her sake bottle raised in one hand, Yoshitsune spoke from the pillar at the entrance.

“Satou Brothers, it isn’t good to worrying too much about what others are doing. ...Listen up, all of you. The Testament Union? P.A. Oda? The fall of the Takeda clan? Who cares? Our strength will fall to just Qing? So what?”

She laughed and then spoke in her heart.

...Those are the words of those with short lives.

“You short-lived fools.”

She licked the mouth of the bottle and took a bit of sake into the side of her mouth. The burning feeling of something striking the mucous membrane of her cheek felt good. The flavor soaking into the roots of her teeth was exceptional.

“What is a nation and what is a person? To me, they’re just worthless frameworks. Nations fall and people disappear. That’s just the way of the world.”

“Then...”

As Musashi’s vice president began, Yoshitsune assumed the girl was speaking a question she had heard countless times. And her assumption was correct.

“Why are you ruling the nation of Qing-Takeda?”

“Hah,” she laughed. “Qing-Takeda? What are you talking about? That was a completely different nation not long ago. Well, I left the Ming to the Satou Brothers because the horse-riding people suited me better. A people that lives within nature and stays on the move even while giving birth will not fall and is very rarely destroyed. Musashi is in a similar state right now. That’s why we’re so compatible.”

Listen.

“Nations may fall, but another nation will rise up. Short-lived fools who can only belong to one or two nations during their entire life can never seem to accept that

fact. Nations will fall. As long as you understand that, you can live a positive, stress-free life without any pointless conflict or anger.”

“Then why do you even have a nation?”

...Oh, so she's gone this far.

The girl's demanding tone was something Yoshitsune had not heard recently. She looked down on it as the anger of the short-lived or jealousy towards the long-lived, but she did not try to reject it or stop it.

“How should I know?” she declared with her standard irresponsibility. “Listen. I have power and I know what to do both based on my knowledge and experience. Also, it's a pain having to do everything yourself, so I started having people do things for me. And the next thing I knew, here I was. That's all I can say, little girl. If I had to put it to words...”

She felt it went without saying, but she said it anyway.

“I myself am a nation.”

So...

“As long as I live, an empire will form around me and continue to exist. But who cares about the form of that nation? Who cares about the life of the people? To me, all short-lived things will eventually die. But as long as I remain, a new nation will form to replace the one that disappears. So...”

“So?”

“My mere existence brings about a nation, so the people of my nation should go die for my sake. They should go die to make me happy. If they do, their lives will have at least brought happiness to all the people of the empire I created. ...Do you have a problem with that?”

Musashi's vice president's expression vanished.

Oh, thought Yoshitsune as a sharp look turned her way.

“In other words, you are saying people’s lives are worth less than a nation.”

“Of course.”

“Then...”

What an interesting young girl, she thought upon hearing that. She continues asking questions and does not give in to fear.

...It’s almost like she views me as a teacher and is trying to learn as much as she can.

That was not a bad choice. No one had tried to learn this much about her recently. They all either bowed down to her or argued as enemies using the reasoning of the short-lived. And so she took a gulp of sake and spoke.

“Ask me anything.”

“In that case, there is something I would like to ask.”

And the girl asked it.

“How much is your life worth?”

An interesting question, thought Yoshitsune. The value of my life, hm?

As she asked herself the question, she formed a mental smile.

She could see the Satou Brothers opening their eyes wide, but they always gave amusing reactions despite being long-lived. She felt fierce warriors should be calmer.

“Kah kah. Young girl, what is your name?”

“Masazumi.”

Yoshitsune almost burst out laughing.

...What kind of fool only gives her given name when asked for her name!?

She saw the black-winged girl's shoulders tremble, so she assumed that girl was thinking the same thing.

“Let me ask one thing first, Masazumi. Did you give no thought to the possibility that I would kill you here? Surely you were not thinking that I am generous or that doing so would not be kingly.”

“Of course the possibility occurred to me,” casually replied Musashi's vice president. “In an emergency, the 4th special duty officer here will do something. That is what allows me to be here without worry. I have no intention of leaving my safety in your hands.”

And...

“That is my ‘nation’.”

...An excellent answer.

“I see.”

Yoshitsune began to drink some more sake.

“ ... ”

But she decided talking would be more fun. She did not move her gaze from Masazumi.

“Are you listening?”

“Go right ahead.”

...Good.

“You are the same kind of person as the Satomi boy or the impertinent Houjou girl over there. You make sure to protect yourself. That is the greatest reason why

the short-lived wish for a nation. Satou Brothers, that is why Masazumi here is not a bad person. She had a good upbringing.”

Yoshitsune felt the corner of her mouth rising.

...Good. This is going well.

She took in a breath and the night air felt cold. Or perhaps it was just her body heating up. It did not matter either way. All that mattered was that someone willing to oppose her stood before her.

...How lovely.

She wondered when she had last had a true fight to the death. A battle in which she fought as nothing but herself and put her very existence on the line.

It had been a long time ago.

While protected by the history recreation, the Minamoto clan had won the Genpei War and conflict had broken out between the factions led by her brother, Minamoto Yoritomo, and herself, Minamoto Yoshitsune.

The troops of the elder brother, Yoritomo, had ultimately cornered the younger brother, Yoshitsune, who had a weaker political foundation.

...But there were many theories as to whether he survived or died.

Via multiple interpretations, Yoshitsune had cross over to the continent and started the Yuan Dynasty.

“In the process of starting the Yuan, the Satou Brothers here had shamelessly lived on and Benkei had been repaired, so I returned here to retrieve them. When I did, I assassinated my brother who had inherited the name Sanetomo.”

Just as she finished speaking and let out a breath, the Satou Brothers suddenly cried out in unison.

“Yoshitsune-sama!”

“Don’t worry about it. Ha ha. This always happens when talking about the past.

Even as she laughed, she felt something falling down her cheeks.

They were tears.

Ahh, she thought. How nostalgic.

That had all been about four or five hundred years before.

Thinking back on it, it had been a wonderful age of deadly conflict. That time when one’s life was on the line every day, hour, and minute was maddeningly nostalgic now.

Her long life meant that someone would rely on her even if she hid her name or form and they would begin to protect her once the nation would disappear if she was lost.

Fleeing was useless, so she could only face it.

...But once I create my empire, I have no enemies.

And so she spoke.

“Such a ridiculous issue.”

She took in a breath and looked up at the sky. The fleets of Hexagone Française and M.H.R.R. were visible in all directions. And M.H.R.R. was supported by P.A. Oda. However...

“Honestly... The Testament Union? P.A. Oda? What do they matter? The pope-chancellor who leads the Testament Union will be someone else in less than fifty years. And Oda will ultimately be replaced by Hashiba and then your Matsudaira clan will take over after that. It will all come back to the surname Ariadust.”

She laughed.

“Satou Brothers, don’t show them any pity. After all, you aren’t pure long-lived like me, so you’ll die long before me as well. Four hundred years ago, I cut down the brother who I shared the same feelings with. So...”

So...

“To me, everything will disappear and nothing can remain with me. That means I will be the final ruler of this world of warring states. But even if I am the only one to survive, my empire will remain with me.”

“Then your life is worth...”

“No more or less than yours, Masazumi.”

She raised the bottle and lightly tapped her head.

“What is the difference between that contained in my life and that contained in yours? It is true I have knowledge and experience, but from an individual standpoint, I cannot use those things any better than someone else. And just like with my brother, I will die when the time comes for me to die.

“However, I do not want that. I am my empire, but as an individual, I am merely a container for a life, just like my imperial subjects. My subjects should die for my empire’s sake, but I cannot die for my empire’s sake. After all, a lot of lives just like mine would be left out in the cold.”

She pulled up a nearby seat and sat.

“Of course, that is just my own conceit. If I die and my empire disappears, those subjects would simply move to some other nation. But I selfishly do not wish for that to happen. By having someone so long-lived as their ruler, my subjects can convince themselves that their nation will not disappear. ...I cannot rely on anyone, but letting them think that to be the case is the one good deed I can do for others.”

Masazumi sat on the edge of the bench and faced Yoshitsune at an angle.

...This is a difficult opponent.

Yoshitsune was the chancellor and student council president of Qing-Takeda.

...But she is on an entirely different level.

This was not a case of being more or less powerful. She took it to a different dimension altogether.

She was different from Fairy Queen Elizabeth or Pope-Chancellor Innocentius who Masazumi had negotiated with before. In fact, all three of them had been different from each other.

...But with Yoshitsune, it feels like her power, subjects, and everything else are not something she took. Instead, they came to her.

There had to have been political conflicts.

In accordance with the Testament descriptions, Innocentius had gained his position with a foundation of economic power. Elizabeth had secured her position through her conflicts with the two Marys.

But...

“You did not take from others. Everything you have came from within. Is that what you are saying?”

“That is because I have lived for so very long.” Yoshitsune did not deny it. “The life span of a pure member of the long-lived race varies from individual to individual, but it usually lasts for thousands of years. To increase our odds of survival, we grow at the same rate as a human for the first dozen or so years of our lives, but it slows down considerably afterwards. When you live for this long, you make plenty of enemies and plenty of allies. You see people switch from one side to the other and you see the descendants of fallen nations making a comeback. ...It all starts to look like it is repeating.”

“Are you interested in the theory of reincarnation from Buddhism...no, from the Dunhi religion?”

“Only the short-lived feel like they understand something based on a theory. When you live as long as I do, you can actually observe it all yourself.”

Yoshitsune used her feet to draw the coast of Kantou on the sandy ground.

“The trend of Qing...no, of the continent is for the ruling people to alternate between the people who rule the river mouth and the horse-riding people who come and go in the fields. Those who rule the river mouth will quickly prosper due to their productive and economic power, but they will destroy themselves in a century due to internal decay and widespread strain to their politics and economics.”

Masazumi understood this. She had learned about it in her politics classes, so she finished for Yoshitsune.

“And then they are crushed by an alliance of the horse-riding people who have united in order to take away their nation?”

“Stop that. Let the elderly speak.” Yoshitsune smiled bitterly. “But that’s basically it. Then the horse-riding people simply improve upon the previous nation’s political structure as they are poor at politics and economics. Their nation quickly expands due to their unique bloodline politics and mobility. ...But in another century, they have scattered so far that the different parts of the nation are isolated and the nation crumbles. In the end, the river mouth people prosper and start a new nation from their river mouth capital.

“Once you understand this pattern, the fall of nations becomes an expected turn of events. And you only need to study the Testament descriptions to understand the pattern. Nothing is more meaningless than getting so worked up over the prosperity of nations.”

...That is because you can act like taking ‘a century’ to prosper is nothing.

She had once asked her father what units the provisional committee used for its political activities. He had said, “In a three month unit called a cour. Remember that. Lately, even continuing for four cours is a big deal.” Compared to that, speaking in centuries was simply too large a scale.

A century was three generations.

“At any rate,” began Masazumi. “Lady Yoshitsune, do you desire the Far East?”

Masazumi saw an immediate answer to her question.

Yoshitsune smiled thinly. She gave neither a denial nor an affirmation, but she did give an answer.

“It depends on how I feel,” she said. “World conquest is more in line with what those Satou Brothers like. Why even talk about the future? Right this very moment, no one but the emperor has as long a lifespan or as much power as me, so if a crisis were to fall over the entire world, I would be the first choice for a representative. After all, the emperor must stay uninvolved with the world.”

“If a crisis were to fall over the entire world? Like what?”

“Well...” Yoshitsune folded her arms and nodded. “Like if aliens attacked. If earth’s representative is chosen by age, it’d be me.”

Naruze wrote something on a Magie Figur and passed it to Masazumi.

“Is she an idiot?” it said.

“Naruze, that Magie Figur has no backing so they can read it through the back.”

“I don’t mind. It’s just more nonsense from someone who will die before me,” said Yoshitsune. “Now, about the Battle of Mikatagahara. That would just bring the deaths of people who will die before me regardless. It doesn’t interest me in the slightest. ...But it’s a battle we win, so my people would rejoice. You can go through with it, Satou Brothers.”

In other words...

“If the Battle of Mikatagahara will make the people of Qing-Takeda rejoice, you can go all out against Matsudaira.”

...This is bad.

Yotshitsune's whim made Masazumi gulp.

She wanted to keep the conversation away from there if she could.

But Yoshitsune took another swig of sake and continued speaking.

“Listen. The tendency of your nation means nothing to me. It's just a temporary issue. So even if you bow down or claim this is unfair, it won't matter. In a century, all of you will be gone and a different nation will have replaced yours. Trying to move me emotionally is meaningless here.”

“Then you are going through with the Battle of Mikatagahara and cornering Matsudaira all on a whim?”

“That's how it goes in the Testament descriptions, right? Shingen will die of illness, but that just means I'll retire from the Takeda side. That will start the age of Qing instead. I don't see any problem there.” She paused for a moment. “I know. I make my decisions on a whim, so I'll give you a single chance.”

Namely...

“If you can make me feel something, be it interest or anger or anything else, I will think about doing something else with the Battle of Mikatagahara. The world is always changing before my eyes. If one of you can leave an impression on me amid all that, I will see some slight value in you. How about that? Can you do it?” she asked. “If not, we can enjoy how ‘bad’ we both are in the Battle of Mikatagahara. And just like Satomi and Houjou, I will expect something of you. Can you do it?”

Chapter 14: Apologizer in a Place of Reflection

CHAPTER 14

"Apologizer in a Place of Reflection"



What is the latest style?
Point Allocation (Samurai Fashion)

What is the latest style?

Point Allocation (Samurai Fashion)

“How can we make Lady Yoshitsune angry?”

Asama tilted her head at the words arriving from IZUMO and she looked to Kimi.

“Kimi, do you know how to make someone angry?”

“Heh heh heh. Do not ask the impossible of someone as pure-hearted as me, titty girl.”

“Wow. I am already mad!”

“Calm down, calm down.” Mitotsudaira asked a question with an impurity-removing tamagushi in her hair. “In other words, Masazumi is dealing with someone who has grown frigid after centuries of experience?”

“Oh, saying that will produce some impurity.”

“Eh?”

Mitotsudaira’s tamagushi turned pink up to the very edges of the paper, so she pulled it out with a frown.

“Th-this is strict.”

“Heh heh. Try to stay calm, wolf girl. There is no need to growl when there is no enemy before you.” Kimi crossed her legs in front of Asama. “Anyway, Yoshitsune’s lack of emotion does not come from her position of superiority. She is what you get when someone like me resigns themselves to whatever might come.”

“You mean...”

The others glanced over as Asama trailed off and Kimi gave a bitter smile.

“She is what my foolish brother used to be but without the self-harm. ...Heh heh. What’s with that look? Go tell Masazumi to shove all the restaurant’s spices into her mouth. Oh, but I suppose that could qualify as ‘harming her’ depending on how you interpret it.”

“Um, Kimi?” Mitotsudaira tilted her head. “Were you trying to harm the chancellor back then?”

“Why do you say that?”

Kimi gave a sober tilt of her head and everyone exchanged a glance with their eyebrows flat. Asama then cleared her throat.

...Well, Kimi is part of Toori-kun’s family.

With that thought, she looked to the distant lights of IZUMO and opened her mouth.

“Making her angry isn’t going to be easy. Unlike Toori-kun back then, she’s drinking and enjoying herself on the surface, but behind it all, she must be coolly thinking that all of that will eventually disappear.”

“There is a way.”

Everyone turned toward Kimi who ignored the attention, took Mitotsudaira’s hand, and filed down her nails.

However, Mitotsudaira’s mouth stiffened at the light sensation of the nail file.

“U-um, wh-what should M-Masazu...miheee!”

“Mitotsudaira-sama, Masazumi-heee is an interesting new word.”

“No, um...”

Asama stuck a second tamagushi into Mitotsudaira’s hair and spoke to Kimi.

“Kimi.”

“Fine then.” The dancer smiled. “Listen. When people get angry or laugh, it is a reaction to something, isn’t it?”

“In other words...we should tell Masazumi to say something?”

Asama thought about what part of Masazumi’s talks made people the angriest. She then sent some advice over the divine chat.

Asama: “Masazumi, could you make some kind of joke?”

Vice President: “Eh? This is sudden and I can’t just make a joke out of nowhere.”

“She asked because you’ve always managed it before,” muttered everyone else, but Asama shushed them.

Asama: “U-um, then do you have some kind of funny story? Like something that happened to you?”

Vice President: “Let me think.”

About ten seconds of silence followed and the others pulled their chairs over toward Asama.

And suddenly...

Vice President: “Oh, come to think of it...”

Asama: “Eh? What is it?”

“Well,” came Masazumi’s response.

Vice President: “I went to the used bookstore the other day, and the books From Dawn to Noon in the Far East, Recipes for Mincemeat, Introduction to Shadow Sumo, Everyday Life in Sviet Rus, Daily Far Eastern Recipes, Race to Hunt the

Utensil Dropping Warrior, I Want Out!, Countdown of the Top Hundred Arson Cases, and Expert's Guide to Shadow Sumo were lined up in that order.”

Everyone began complaining how long the list was and telling her to wrap it up, but Asama shushed them again.

Vice President: “Anyway, when I looked at them in a row like that, I couldn’t help but laugh.”

Everyone made comments of confusion, so Asama shushed them yet again.

Asama: “U-um, why did you laugh?”

Vice President: “Reading across the first letter of each title, it said ‘fried rice’.”

Everyone fell silent, so Asama remade her smile and took a breath.

However, Kimi suddenly spoke.

“Asama, you can give up now. You tried, but it didn’t work.”

“Shh.”

Asama: “U-um, uh, Masazumi? You see... Are you listening?”

She hesitated and finally asked a question.

Asama: “Um, what I mean is... Where were you going with that?”

Vice President: “Eh?”

Five seconds of silence followed.

Vice President: “Well, uh, that was it.”

Uqui: “Now, how about we begin the war crimes tribunal?”

Asama: “I-I’m sorry. That was my fault. I really do apologize. It wasn’t Masazumi’s fault. I...yes, I think I was wrong there. I’m sorry about everything.”

Gold Mar: “Well, um, how should I put it? I have to admit that is a...powerful attack.”

Laborer: “Whether you understand it or not, don’t say anything here.”

Worshipper: “I think that would be so far from making her feel something that she’d kill you.”

83: “How about some curry? When you’re sad, curry is best.”

Vice President: “Wait, wait. What’s all this? Don’t just move on ahead like that. Did I say something wrong? If so, please tell me so I can fix it.”

Almost Everyone: “Um...”

“Anyway,” said Kimi with a sigh. “This will probably be difficult for someone on as high a level as Masazumi, but there is a trick to telling jokes.”

Asama tilted her head.

“A trick?”

“How about I say I won’t tell you what it is?”

“How about I say I won’t ask?”

“Oh, dear. What a mean girl.”

You leave me no choice, thought Kimi.

“It’s freshness.”

Everyone exchanged a confused glance, but one person nodded.

It was Gin.

While everyone else had dragged their chairs over, she was creating a yakiniku paella. She only stood up after holding the large plate of paella out to Muneshige who was waiting with his chair in hand. She then walked over along with him.

“In other words, it must be a never-before-seen technique, correct?”

“Correct.”

Kimi brushed both hands through her hair and spread her arms upwards.

“Now, then. Heh heh. Can you say any more about it?”

“Judge. In other words, it is like a battle.”

Meaning...

“In combat, a technique your opponent has never seen before is the most effective. If Lady Yoshitsune can no longer feel anything no matter what she hears, sees, or has done to her, we only need to make a joke that is new to her. That will get a reaction from her.”

“Judge,” agreed Kimi. “That’s right. But that won’t be easy. She’s over four hundred, you know? With that much time, she’ll have seen most every joke and also experienced most every type of anger. She has lived five or six times longer than our grandparents. That’s five or six times the experiences the average person has in their lifetime.”

“So she can take a distant view of things?” asked Adele.

“Probably,” began Mitotsudaira with a nod. “This is not going to be easy. She fought in the Middle Ages when it was popular to deal with battles by having both generals name themselves and enter single combat, so she will have experienced almost every kind of provocation.”

“That’s right.” Asama nodded. “Since ancient times, speaking has been seen as a magical action that brings the contents of one’s words into the world. That is why

people would write love letters while praying that love would be granted, but the same applies to provocation. If the enemy did not respond to the provocation, it was thought that the contents of the provocation would actually happen to the general at some later time. That belief led young commanders to respond to provocation and lose their lives.”

“Heh heh. You like those stories, don’t you? But in that case, Yoshitsune will have seen her comrades die like that and she will have experienced life-risking provocations.”

Vice President: “Then what do we do? Should I make a joke? I have a good one I’ve been holding onto.”

Almost Everyone: “Definitely don’t use that one!!”

Vice President: “Yeah, I should save it for later. It would be a waste to use it now.”

Everyone hung their heads, but Kimi took Mitotsudaira’s other hand and smiled bitterly.

“Don’t worry. I made him promise to live a life of recovery.”

Everyone around her stopped moving when they heard that, but Gin and Mary spoke.

“Made him promise?”

“Judge. Just watch. That promise will destroy this 400+ year frigidity.”

After all...

“It was enough to make me cry.”

Masazumi turned in her seat to face Yoshitsune from two meters away.

Yoshitsune was in the entrance of the restaurant and Masazumi was outside.

...But how am I supposed to give her an emotion?

She understood that wondering that while facing her was proof that she was at a stalemate.

...I need to make her laugh, feel sad, or grow angry.

She thought and thought and thought.

What would be best? What could she do? What would work?

She called herself a politician, but that title was sometimes completely useless.

“What’s wrong? It looked like you had an argument over divine transmission, so are you giving them the silent treatment? Now, let me be clear about something.” Yoshitsune crossed her legs in her chair. “You seem to specialize in nudity jokes, but that won’t help you here because I’ve seen that plenty of times at festivals long ago.”

“Well, that’s not really *our* specialty so much as it’s...”

Masazumi decided it was not worth continuing, but Yoshitsune smiled bitterly and said something more.

“Listen. Trying to provoke me won’t work either. You had to put your life on the line with the battlefield provocations of the Middle Ages. Something you’re just saying isn’t going to reach me. I’ve already experienced more than enough tragedy and I’m familiar with almost every type of comedy, so they won’t have much effect either.”

...That’s what I thought.

Anything Masazumi knew, Yoshitsune was certain to know. She had more experiences to draw from and those experiences were much deeper. Any kind of comedy, anger, or tragedy Masazumi tried would end with her saying she already knew that one.

But if they could not draw her attention here...

...We'll be seen as worthless and she'll begin the Battle of Mikatagahara for the joy of her subjects.

If that happened, Naruze's fate was in question and the other damages were worrying too.

She needed to avoid that or at least lighten-

“...!”

Masazumi frantically shook her head.

...No! If I start thinking about only lightening the damage, I'll grow fainthearted!

She realized where she was headed, woke herself up, and once more thought about what to do.

As she did, she looked past Yoshitsune.

She saw a naked boy.

Wait, thought Masazumi. I didn't ask for you.

But the naked boy who had rushed into the restaurant's back entrance greeted Walsingham with a raised hand.

When Walsingham's gaze met the idiot's, she pointed at Masazumi.

“Together?”

“Hey, hound girl! Yes, yes, no, no! Yay! Sorry, thank you, goodbye!”

...Please stop trying to use every English word you know.

At any rate, the naked boy greeted the others who were drinking and enjoying themselves and gave a quick self-introduction. While very drunk, Jonson pointed at the idiot and that idiot made a gesture of holding something between his thighs and grinding up and down. He shouted “I just can’t get it out!” and the restaurant roared with laughter.

However, Yoshitsune was facing Masazumi and did not notice any of that.

Naruze must have heard the voices from the side because she covered her ears with her hands and refused to turn around. Ujinao, Yoshiyori, and the Satou Brothers all stared intently at Yoshitsune as if they had seen something odd.

Meanwhile, Yoshitsune mistook this for everyone focusing on her.

“Now, what are you going to do? Do you have nothing at all? And what’s with those strange looks?”

“Well, this is certainly a strange and incomprehensible sight.”

The naked boy then noticed Masazumi. He tilted his head and motioned her over. Then, to tell her to come drink, he stuck an empty bamboo bottle into his god mosaic and had the bottle motion her over.

...Die! I can’t! I can’t! Die, you idiot!

As she shook her hands back and forth and pointed at the ground, both the idiot and Yoshitsune tilted their heads in unison.

“What’s this? Is it some kind of performance, Masazumi?”

“Well, I suppose you could say that when it’s a performer doing it.”

“Oh? A performer you say?”

“Judge. I’d rather not admit it, but yes.”

There seemed to be a misunderstanding about who she was referring to, but the performer began strolling over with his head still tilted.

...Stay away!

Yoshitsune gave Masazumi a bitter smile while completely oblivious.

“Are you making amusing faces now? That certainly is a surprised look. Or are you trying to say I’m frightening?”

“N-no. But I think something frightening is about to happen!”

Meanwhile, the idiot arrived right behind Yoshitsune with his head still tilted.

While Masazumi wondered what the idiot was going to do, he placed a nearby chair behind Yoshitsune. Yoshitsune, however, simply smiled as she had not noticed.

“There’s nothing to fear here. I am a bighearted person. See?” She puffed out her chest and lowered her shoulders. “Show me whatever performance you’ve got.”

As soon as she said that, the idiot stood on the chair and placed the god mosaic of his crotch on her head. While standing perfectly straight, he spoke in a silly voice.

“Topknot!”

At 8:37 PM, everyone at the IZUMO restaurant and on a portion of the Musashi froze in place.

However, the naked boy in the center of the restaurant pulled his hips back a little.

“Ponytaaaiiiil!”

The idiot maintained the position for a few seconds before slowly stepping down from the chair and circling around in front of Yoshitsune. He lowered his hips a bit, placed his hands on her shoulders, and nodded at her with a serious expression.

“Don’t worry. I’m here to save you.”

“You bastard!!”

As slow beads of sweat poured down her body, Masazumi saw Yoshitsune stand up on her chair, grab the idiot’s neck, and shake him back and forth.

“Wh-what the hell do you think you’re doing to my head!?”

However, the idiot stuck his little finger all the way in his nose.

“What’s this, what’s this? But I seem to recall a certain flat-chested person saying they were bighearted.”

He looked up at Yoshitsune.

“Are you mad? Are you mwaaad?”

“Kh!”

Yoshitsune clenched her back teeth and shoved the idiot away.

“I-I am not mad! I-I have a big heart! Yes!!”

“Yeah, I thought so.”

He wiped his finger on the edge of her clothes, stretched her upper lip down, and gave a bitter smile.

“C’mon... Yoshitsune was it? Well, it doesn’t matter. You calm down a little. If a centuries-old long-lived gets all touchy like that, it’ll set a bad example for your men.”

“Eh? Well, yes, I suppose.”

“See?” He held a chair out for her. “Listen. People have always pictured important people sitting in a calm and arrogant pose, so sit and calm down. And,

um, Black Mal. You draw up a quick commemorative sketch, okay? Now, Yoshitsune, look over there and smile.”

The idiot placed another chair behind Yoshitsune and stood on it.

“Say topknot!”

“Damn you!!

“What’s this, what’s this? Did this person just get really mwaaad at a repeat joke? I seem to recall something about having too much life experience for that. Hmmm?”

“Kh!”

“C’mon, c’mon. Calm down.” He patted Yoshitsune’s head with his palm. “Calm down. That was my fault. You shouldn’t do a topknot on a girl’s head. I’ve seen the error of my ways.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, judge and all that. So sit down and I’ll give a proper apology. ...First, get a nice arrogant pose like you’re a king and then I’ll circle behind you and apologize. That’s how it’ll work. One, two, three. Please forgive my...topknot!”

“You bastard!!!!”

“What’s this, what’s this? Is she super mwaaad even though I apologized? But whyyyyy?”

“Kh!”

Masazumi gave a deep mental sigh while wondering what was going on.

But a sudden memory came to her.

...Oh, right. For me, he pulled own my pants.

Masazumi understood what Kimi had said.

It had nothing to do with being a provocation or a joke. If you wanted something the other person had never seen before...

...You have to do something no one would ever do.

She looked back over and found the idiot holding Yoshitsune's head back with an arm while she flailed her arms trying to punch him like a child.

"Ah ha ha," he laughed. "Yoshitsune, you're such a kid."

"H-how dare you say that with such a short life! What could you possibly understand!?"

"What's this, what's this? Who said anything about understanding?" He smiled at her. "It's not a problem to me if I don't understand you."

Masazumi made sure to remember the look on Yoshitsune's face when she heard that.

It was a dumbfounded, sad, and angry look that seemed to have lost everything.

...Wait.

Even Masazumi thought about stopping the idiot.

But he grabbed her head and pointed it toward him.

"Listen."

"T-to what!?"

"That settles it. You're definitely a kid. After all, you get legit mad whenever I do something. It's just so cute."

"H-how dare you!!"

“You just don’t get it,” he said. “It’s not a problem if I don’t understand you. So...”

So...

“You’re cute, Yoshitsune. And that’s good enough for me.”

“...”

“Hey,” he said. “Yoshitsune, come join our school. If you say you can’t laugh or get angry, you can worry that over with Horizon.”

“Who do you... Who the hell do you think I am!?”

“You’re Yoshitsune, aren’t ya? Did you forget? Did you actually have to ask someone? And listen.” He pointed at himself and gave a swung his head. “I am... Oh, I know. You can call me Wet Man of the Sink. Oh, but don’t show any more interest in me. Isn’t that dangerous?”

To your sanity maybe, silently added Masazumi, but the idiot lightly tapped on Yoshitsune’s head and smiled.

“Yoshitsune.”

“What!?”

“Yoshitsunee.”

“I said what!?”

“Yoshitsuneeeee.”

“What is it!?”

“Memorized it yet?”

She did not ask what. She simply raised her eyebrows with her face growing red.

“I did not need to be reminded!!”

“Make sure you don’t forget it, okay?”

“I have never once forgotten it or given it up! That is the name I agreed to with my brother!!”

“I see. So you’ve never tried to forget yourself or give yourself up.”

Toori rubbed her head once.

“Way to go.”

“ ... ”

Masazumi shuddered because she remembered the story of that boy’s past that Asama had told her in Mikawa.

...Saying that only means something when you have someone to compare it to.

Yoshitsune also seemed to realize who he was comparing her to here, so she looked up at him.

“Why? Why aren’t you using any of the reasoning you lowly people like so much?”

“What? Don’t be stupid. I’m talking about you here, so talking about someone else would be pointless. ...Oh, and sorry for mentioning Horizon. I forgot what Nate said. Comparing you to another girl made you want to punch me, didn’t it? ...Oh, should I not have brought up Nate either?”

He laughed.

“Yoshitsune, if you’ve ever got a problem, come to our school. I can’t do anything, but I bet we could do all sorts of things and learn all sorts of things if you were with us.”

“I am more or less the ruler of this world! Why would I help the likes of you!?”

“What’s wrong with the master of the house helping out the servant? It makes a moving story and it sounds like the beginning of a love story with a maid. Or is that because I play too many porn games? ...Anyway, if you’re the ruler of the world, will you lend us the world for a while? We just want to conquer it and let out descendants travel all over the place until they get sick of it.”

And...

“Once our descendants get tired of traveling around the world, you can have it back. And if that’s too boring, you can help me conquer the world just like the others are doing.”

“T-to me, the world is already mine.”

Masazumi heard her add the word “so”.

...*So?*

She knew where Yoshitsune was going. It was something only she could say.

“I see no reason to conquer a world that is already mine!”

She gave a shouted rejection.

To her, the world did not belong to anyone but her, so she was refusing to help conquer it because she would not let anyone else touch it.

And Masazumi knew they truly could not touch it. Yoshitsune was such a large existence that she could reject anything they tried.

But the idiot smiled, opened his mouth, and started with three simple words.

“Don’t be silly.”

“Y’know?” said the idiot. “Just cause you don’t see a reason to do it, doesn’t mean I don’t. So...So, y’see? It doesn’t matter what the world is in your eyes. I’m just saying you can help me if you want. If you do, I’ll thank you and give you a reason for having helped me.”

“Wait.” Yoshitsune sounded completely dumbfounded. “Are you going to ignore me? The owner of the world?”

“That settles it. You’re gonna help me.”

After all...

“I’m gonna be the king and I have to head out to the forefront to do that. So if you don’t want me to ignore you, you’re only choice is to start in the same direction as me and move out ahead of me.”

So...

“Help me, Yoshitsune. I think I’ll have an easier time of becoming king with you on my side. Okay?”

Strength gathered in her shoulders and she started to say something.

“...”

But she instead tore the idiot’s hand from her head with a troubled look on her face. She then looked over her shoulder toward the others and sighed.

“Satou Brothers, what’s your judgment? Was I mad?”

“Um, well...”

The brothers exchanged a troubled glance, but they finally nodded.

“It was a lot like old times.”

“Eh?”

The idiot frowned, faced Masazumi, and pointed at Yoshitsune.

“Hey, Seijun. Yoshitsune’s amazing. They just said she’s had one on her head before this.”

A moment later...

Adele heard the distant sound of a wall or something similar being destroyed on IZUMO.

As the reverberation vanished into the sky, she spoke to the others.

“It looks like they’ve managed to set up a friendly relationship...even if it’s only one of boke and tsukkomi.”

“I-is that really a good thing?”

“It’s hard to say,” said the others while hanging their heads.

Meanwhile, Adele sighed.

...How is this going to turn out?

Even if they had established a friendly relationship, they had not decided on anything yet.

Even if they were going to settle the Battle of Mikatagahara through negotiation, it was unclear how that would be arranged. And more importantly...

“We haven’t decided how we’ll handle the eastern nations in Kantou.”

“Heh heh. Yes, we haven’t decided what route the Musashi will take. But in that case, we’re finally seeing the true meaning behind this meeting in IZUMO.”

Adele nodded at Kimi’s words.

“Satomi and Houjou asked us to grow stronger.”

When she had first heard that, it had sounded like all their work during the armada battle had been for nothing, so she had felt like the core of her being was slipping away.

But the subsequent talks and the talk with the chancellor had shown her they had meant a different sort of strength.

...They don't want us to grow stronger militarily. They want us to be a stronger nation.

Marube-ya: “That’s right. I think it’s a problem that our store is always running around dealing with food supply issues whenever something happens. We need to make a Musashi that can function without our store. ...Then again, we won’t make as much money that way.”

Everyone had to be wondering what they could do.

Adele also trusted that the people of the eastern nations were expecting something of them. The Musashi had seemed like nothing but a large transport ship, but it had fought its way through the Battle of Mikawa and the armada battle.

...The people of the eastern nations are expecting us to grow stronger so they can ally with us.

“Heh heh heh. Flat vassal, flat knight, and everyone else.”

Kimi raised her after-dinner wine as she spoke.

“These eastern warriors were called here by the present situation that you managed to reach while half in tears. And now they want Musashi to somehow escape this situation so they can invite us to Edo in the east.”

“That’s right,” agreed Mitotsudaira. “The Musashi’s repairs are seventy percent complete and the rest of the repairs will need to be done at Kantou IZUMO’s

floating dock in Edo. The question is how to escape this pincer attack, pass through M.H.R.R. and P.A. Oda, and arrive at the eastern nations that include Qing-Takeda.”

Adele saw Mitotsudaira turn toward IZUMO and narrow her golden eyes.

“We have seen Musashi’s next destination: the Far Eastern reservation in Edo and Kantou IZUMO. After that, Masazumi must make a plan and complete the give-and-take negotiations necessary for that plan.”

She sighed and looked across those listening.

“Everyone, let us remain hopeful and wait for the conclu-... Is it just me, or is this a lot more people than before!? What is going on!?”

“Calm down, 5th Special Duty Officer. And if we arrive in Edo, we’ll be near your territory.”

“Y-yes, that’s true, but it needs some maintenance as a health resort. What about it?”

“Judge. Once we arrive, you can make a ton of money with your huge supply of natto. But no extorting the people here, okay!?”

The intention had been to cheer Mitotsudaira up, but she slowly fell to her knees.

Asama silently placed a depression-purifying tamagushi in her hair.

Chapter 15: One who Invites the World

CHAPTER 15

"One who Invites the World"



What should one do
To get someone
To turn toward them?

Point Allocation (Lesson)

What should one do

To get someone

To turn toward them?

Point Allocation (Lesson)

Satomi Yoshiyasu had passed out drunk, but she sensed warmth within herself while the meeting at the restaurant continued.

She was long-lived and they grew quickly while young to ensure their survival, even if the growth was still not as quick as the half-lived or humans. However, that did not mean their bodies matured quickly. It was an unstable thing that prioritized their visual form.

The alcohol had confused her body and she simply felt vaguely warm.

I'm so immature, she thought to herself.

...That's why I wasn't able to draw Murasamemaru after sister died.

Murasamemaru had not wanted her to use it. But for some reason, the one who had killed her sister had managed to draw that sword associated with the eight virtues and Yatsufusa had also obeyed him.

...Why?

She did not understand any of it.

When she had finished her training and exams, her sister had been the student council president and that sister had given her Righteousness, the god of war that had belonged to the previous vice president. It was one of the Eight Dog gods of war that were positioned below Yatsufusa.

Her sister's god of war had originally been Honesty and...

...That guy had Loyalty, but...

Loyalty referred specifically to one's loyalty to their ruler.

...So why did he murder his ruler after she returned victorious from Yatsufusa's first battle and why did he take over her name and Satomi?

She had thought she had come to an understanding about all that, but she decided it was the heat within her that was causing it to come bubbling up once more.

But why was she sleeping here with such a sweltering core?

Had she caught a cold? It was shameful, but her sister had always been by her side when she had caught colds in the past.

“ ... ”

She opened her eyes a little and bright light met them.

However, she could see something blocking out the lights. It was the top half of a human body looking down at her.

Her head was resting in someone's lap.

And the great shadow produced by that person's chest showed just how voluminous that chest was. However, the volume of this shadow was not that of her sister's in her memories.

“Oh, have you woken? You were muttering the word ‘sister’ over and over.”

“Nwaaaah! Houjou Ujinao!?”

Yoshiyasu frantically sat up, but she stopped when her forehead hit the bottom of Ujinao's breasts.

“Nn!”

“Just to be clear, this automaton body is an underestimated simulation of what my original body would have looked like if it had developed normally. After all, an overestimation would have destroyed me.”

...Why does she piss me off so much!?

She pulled herself toward her waist and sat up. She found herself on two benches lined up next to each other in a corner of the restaurant. She also noticed the others having a meeting at a table in the back.

...He's there.

Satomi Yoshiyori noticed her and raised a hand.

“Yoshiyasu, you should thank Lady Ujinao. She gave you a charm to counteract the alcohol.”

“No need to thank me. Everyone is powerless and cute while asleep.”

Yoshiyasu felt her face grow warm and a teacup was carried to her from the kitchen.

“Here, this should warm you up. It has a little alcohol in it, but that should make it easier. Drink it all and be refreshed.”

“Testament. Thank you very much.”

Yoshiyasu looked at who was handing her the teacup. It was a naked boy.

It took a while before her scream died down.

“I will admit that is about how most people would react if they aren't used to him.”

Masazumi gave that comment while breaking a wheat cracker between her lips at the back table.

“To be honest, you got used to him a lot faster than the rest of us,” replied Naruze while glaring at her.

“Please don’t say that.”

While watching the naked boy enter the kitchen and begin cooking, Masazumi looked at the sign frame on the surface of the table. It was a Far Eastern one opened by the Satou Brothers and it currently displayed a map centered on Kantou.

Until a moment ago, she had been asking the various representatives about their forces.

“I see. So the Satomi clan’s academy is on the Bousou Peninsula which represents the Far Eastern nation of Awa and the nation of Joseon Dynasty Korea, but that has now become a land of war.”

“Testament.” Yoshiyori crossed his arms and nodded from across the table. “The Bousou Peninsula is a portion of Kantou. Because Edo is still only weakly established as Matsudaira land, this land is being invaded by Houjou, Takeda, Sviet Rus, and smaller nations such as Yuuki. Satomi was originally founded by long-lived of the Minamoto clan that scattered upon the destruction of the Kamakura Shogunate. Most of them went to Oushuu, but the forefathers of Satomi settled in Awa because they liked the fishing there. Or to put it another way, Awa is a good land, so people have long been fighting over it.”

Those actions doubled as the foundation of Joseon Dynasty Korea and the fighting between Korean dynasties before that.

“Yes,” said Naruze while tapping the bottom of her pen against her head. “The Korean Peninsula is pretty amazing too. At first, many different kingdoms were founded and the Far East even ruled a portion of it. Of those, Silla, Goguryeo, and Baekje, which had close ties with the Far East, brought about the Three Kingdoms period. Those three kingdoms fought fiercely, but Silla destroyed Baekje with support from Tang. However, Silla also broke apart and the kingdom of Goryea that rose from within it came to rule the peninsula.”

“You should add another ‘but’.”

Naruze nodded in agreement with Yoshiyori.

“Judge. That’s right. After all, when Yuan was destroyed and Ming came into power, the confusion spread to Goryea and a coup d’etat led to the Joseon Dynasty. And...”

She took a breath and gave an upturned look around the table.

“You all understand why I’m talking about this, don’t you?”

Masazumi said “judge” and the rest said “testament”.

“Hashiba’s expedition to Korea,” she said with crossed arms.

“Exactly,” agreed Yoshiyori with a nod. “Hashiba has three chances to come to Kantou. One is the attack on Odawara to destroy the Houjou clan. The other two are the two expeditions to Korea in an attempt to control our nation of Awa. Those two campaigns are of course meant to regain the control of Korea that they had long ago, but from our perspective...”

“Yes,” said Masazumi as she pointed at the Bousou Peninsula. “Not even Kantou is safe from P.A. Oda.”

Masazumi moved her finger from the Bousou Peninsula on the map and tapped Kantou instead.

“Hashiba can find some reason to send troops into Korea twice. And if they justify their actions with the history recreation, the Testament Union can’t stop them. The eastern nations, the Kantou forces, and Matsudaira aka Musashi, which will eventually make its headquarters in Edo, will certainly be threatened by Hashiba twice. That’s what this means.”

Of course, she did not think that would happen right away. Hashiba was currently preparing to attack Mouri and the remaining forces of M.H.R.R. were deployed

around IZUMO. More importantly, the expeditions to Korea occurred after Nobunaga's death and once Hashiba had conquered the Far East.

...But they will definitely happen eventually.

“That is why Satomi and Houjou asked us to grow stronger, isn't it?”

Ujinao replied with a gentle nod.

“Houjou will eventually be destroyed by Hashiba, but the attack on Odawara means Hashiba's forces will arrive very close to Edo. If Musashi opposes P.A. Oda, we predict they will carry out one expedition to Korea simultaneous with the attack on Odawara. That way, they can perform a pincer attack on Edo,” she explained. “There is also Sekigahara and the campaign to Osaka, but we think Odawara will likely be the true direct confrontation between Hashiba and Matsudaira.”

“I would like to say judge, but that would end up being Musashi against the various nations under Hashiba's control.”

She swallowed a sigh and a comment about how hopeless that sounded.

This was not the time or the place to be saying that. After all...

“Satomi Yoshiyori, is this the pressure that has been with you all this time? Do you see yourself having to lead Satomi's academy against Hashiba, P.A. Oda, and the various other nations?”

“Well...”

He started speaking with bitterness in his tone, but Yoshiyasu turned toward him from the other table where she ate toshomen to wake herself up.

“It was to handle that sort of situation that my sister first created the Eight Dog gods of war, and then created Yatsufusa and Murasamemaru. That way we could stand up to them even as a single nation and a single academy.”

Masazumi heard the girl place down her bowl and shake a bottle of pepper.

“And in her first battle using it, my sister proved the effectiveness of Yatsufusa. She shot down three of Ujinao’s aerial ships and returned. But then...”

She trailed off there. After a moment, she swallowed her words and her shoulders started trembling, but someone from the kitchen held out a plate for her.

“This one’s on me. It’s seaweed meant as a ramen topping.”

“Hold up, you idiot,” called out Masazumi with a frown. “You didn’t put that seaweed anywhere...unpleasant, did you?”

“What!?”

The idiot pulled a textbook from the cupboard, threw it to the floor, and pointed at her.

“What kind of terrible person assumes the worst of people like that!? Sure, I did do it! And yes, I was going to grab it away before she ate it if you hadn’t said anything! But why do you have to assume the worst of me!? That hurts, you know!?”

“I don’t feel like dealing with you, so hold your hands out and go to the police box.”

Jonson and Walsingham hooked their arms under his and dragged him outside. Left behind, Yoshiyasu had already lifted the seaweed with her chopsticks, so she lowered it with disgust and reached for a new set of chopsticks.

“Yatsufusa is a symbol of Satomi’s spirit to defiance.”

Masazumi thought to herself while listening to the girl who spoke without looking at her.

...*Really?*

She turned to Yoshiyori and saw him nod with a bitter smile.

“More or less.”

It seemed to be a complicated issue, so she simply nodded and said “judge”.

She then turned to someone else.

“Lady Yoshitsune, I would like to speak with you.”

...I want to make an ally of this being named Yoshitsune.

Masazumi slowly thought.

Dealing with this ruler was tricky, so she needed to find some bait to draw her in.

“Lady Yoshitsune, I would like to hear your opinion on a certain matter.”

“Oh?”

Yoshitsune looked up from the adzuki parfait she was eating and she turned to Masazumi while letting #7 Unno wipe her mouth with a handkerchief.

“Okay then. Why should I give you my opinion and what matter do you refer to?”

“Judge. Your Qing-Takeda and Kakura Academy will be the first to clash with P.A. Oda and you will also be the first to be involved with Musashi due to the Battle of Mikatagahara. Now, you have said the trends of short-lived people like us are of no consequence. You said who lives and who dies and the trends of nations are meaningless. However...”

However...

“Lady Yoshitsune, taking all that into account, I would like to ask you about a certain matter.”

She wanted to make an ally of Yoshitsune with her next words.

She would draw in this person who had lived more than four centuries and had the ability to bring empires into being.

And they had the bait needed for that.

...Yes, I can do this.

The idiot had given a hint earlier.

...Even a frigid long-lived with vast amounts of experience has difficulty making new decisions about things that would normally never happen.

Musashi was dealing with one such thing.

“The Apocalypse.”

Masazumi made up her mind and decided to go in for the attack.

She had to avoid building a meaningless barrier between the two of them. So...

...I need to greedily ask for what I want to know.

With that thought, she said what was on her mind.

“Ending the Apocalypse has become a clear issue for the world since Mikawa.”

Needless to say, the Apocalypse was an otherworldly phenomenon that was completely removed from the categories of politics, economics, or human lives.

...But working toward a solution to that problem has to be a first even for Lady Yoshitsune.

Masazumi placed a hand on the sign frame map and slid it. She displayed Mikawa and the giant bay that had already formed there.

The displayed information seemed to be based on an investigation made by Qing-Takeda's Oat religion which was closely related to the ley lines. As such, the yellow lines indicating the flow of the ley lines were more heavily represented moving north from Mikawa.

Masazumi placed her hand on that map.

“In Mikawa, Lord Motonobu said, ‘aren’t crises fun?’ ...Now, Lady Yoshitsune. The idea that the world is coming to an end has existed in the Far East before, but what we are facing now is not a mere idea. It is the truth. And Lord Motonobu also said the destruction of the world is the ultimate entertainment for every student in the world.”

In that case...

“Lady Yoshitsune, you are a chancellor and student council president, so you are one of the students on that stage. For that reason, I ask you this,” said Masazumi. “Was Lord Motonobu’s ‘lesson’ in Mikawa enough to make you a student of this world?”

“Are you saying a man of only about fifty was looking down on me as a student?”

“Well, in that case,” she said. “Do you happen to know a way of stopping the Apocalypse?”

Masazumi saw Yoshitsune’s expression change at that straightforward question.

The corners of her mouth rose diagonally.

They lifted as if splitting her face open and she took in a quick “heh” of breath.

“You Musashi children don’t know fear, do you?”

“I believe I understand how to show respect and how to speak the truth.”

She tried to remain calm enough to say that and so she spoke further.

“A certain student thinks she stands above the teacher without actually surpassing that teacher, so I am simply nudging her in the side.”

“Well said,” replied Yoshitsune. “But you know what? If the Apocalypse truly does occur, my kingdom and my lifespan will indeed reach their end. That’s certainly inexcusable. When I die, it’ll be on the tatami mats, not at someone else’s hand. But you know what?” she repeated. “Listen. If I want to discuss the Apocalypse, I could just as well meet with P.A. Oda instead of you. They’ve begun something called the Genesis Project and I’ve heard that Genesis Project was brought to P.A. Oda by Mikawa.”

Masazumi realized what Yoshitsune was doing.

...So she is interested in the Apocalypse.

If she were not interested, she would not have brought up the relationship between Mikawa and P.A. Oda or the Genesis Project.

...That means she’s comparing us to P.A. Oda right now.

No.

...She came all this way for that singular purpose.

What a complicated person, Masazumi realized anew.

She knew she had to give the reason why Yoshitsune had come to this meeting to compare P.A. Oda and Musashi.

But she also wanted to be careful.

After all, this person did not hold her true thoughts within.

It was not that she was hiding those true thoughts. She had lived for so very long that she had lost all reason to carry anything inside and she simply followed the natural flow of events.

When one hid thoughts inside, they had to act on them to carry out those hidden thoughts. That was why Yoshitsune’s style was to act on any thoughts as soon as she had them.

...So I need to give the reason why she came here and therefore create a mutual understanding.

That was how not to be swallowed up by Yoshitsune's "nation".

"Lady Yoshitsune," said Masazumi while thinking.

...Why did she come here?

Had the Satou Brother's suggested it? No, the previous discussion suggested they had no real direction in what they wanted. They had simply followed Masazumi's lead.

In that case, it could be sympathy for Satomi and Houjou, but that kind of emotion was present in people but not in "nations".

Another possibility was in reaction to a possible invasion by P.A. Oda, but Yoshitsune did not care about human life.

...In that case...

After recalling what Yoshitsune had done since arriving, Masazumi realized a certain fact.

...Oh, so that's it.

"Are you listening?" she began.

She had the perfect words to draw Yoshitsune in.

"Lady Yoshitsune," she said. "Siding with Musashi would be more fun."

Masazumi spread her arms as if scattering bait and she traced those hands over the map of the Far East on the table.

“Listen. At Mikawa, Lord Motonobu asked a certain question: ‘What type are you? Are you a critic who only enjoys mocking the world or are you the type who enjoys the world? Or...are you the type who will head off to construct the world?’ ”

She almost felt like that question was specifically directed at Yoshitsune.

Then again, it could likely fit any of the “students” in the Far East. After all...

“You claim that nothing will bring out your emotions, but there is one thing that must interest even you.”

“And what is that?”

“The Logismoi Oplo.”

The reason for that was simple.

“Lord Motonobu presented those as the most obvious example of the teaching materials he left for ending the Apocalypse. And he created the Logismoi Oplo by turning a girl’s emotions into those teaching materials. That means Horizon Ariadust, the one who will save the world by ending the Apocalypse, is starting out with even fewer emotions than you.”

Masazumi was very glad they had visited England before this.

“In England, Horizon Ariadust gained an interest in her emotions and she decided to seek a solution to the Apocalypse to prevent everything from being lost. And for that reason, she will take back her emotions.”

She took a breath and wondered if she was saying too much.

“She has accepted that she lost everything, so she is the opposite of you who has given up everything.”

“And so I must want to see where Musashi ends up?”

“That is not for us to say. It is your problem. But one thing is clear.”

Masazumi zoomed out the sign frame map until the entirety of the Far East was displayed and she tapped on that landmass.

“Once we overcome the Apocalypse and create a kingdom that seeks out and creates emotion, it will stand parallel to your emotionless kingdom. I can’t say whether that kingdom will last a hundred, fifty, or even ten years, but even if it is a short time as far as you are concerned, the entire world that is the Far East will be based in emotion and it will completely reject your emotionless kingdom.”

She recalled the end of the confrontation on the bridge in front the academy when they were in Mikawa. Despite having won, the idiot had continued on all on his own. And what was it he had said then?

...He said it was enough to know there was a way to save Horizon.

This was the same.

“I guarantee that your ‘kingdom’ can take a form other than a state of emotionlessness. You are surrounded by more than just a cruel cycle of loss. There are other ways for you to live, but you are choosing to live this way. ...We will prove that to be the case.”

They had no clue how to gain the power they needed as a nation or how to retrieve all the Logismo Oplo, but their greatest objective was clear.

“We *will* end the Apocalypse and conquer this world.”

That statement caused Yoshitsune to pause briefly.

After the span of a few breaths, she finally spoke with a sigh.

“Wait just a moment.”

She stirred up her adzuki parfait, drank the rest, placed down the container, sighed again, and had #7 wipe her mouth.

“Satou Brothers! Yes, yes. Both of you can do this one. I can’t tell you apart, so don’t bother trying to show off. Where’s your answer?”

“T-testament!”

“Good. If you can hear me, then return to the ship and prepare for our trip home! We’re returning to Qing-Takeda tomorrow morning.”

“But...”

“There’s no reason to stay here any longer.”

She waved her hand as she spoke.

“The negotiations are complete.”

The negotiations were complete.

That announcement from Yoshitsune caused Naruze to frown.

Masazumi, however, raised a finger toward her to tell her to wait.

This was no time to panic. After all...

...Yoshitsune only acts when she has reason to.

That meant something had been set in motion within her.

She then spoke up as if replying to Masazumi’s thought.

“Hey.”

She turned toward her with a direct and almost glaring look in her eyes.

“Listen. You said all you idiots would act on your own to show me some new kind of ‘kingdom’ even if I didn’t do anything. That’s what you said.”

The long-lived woman spat out a laugh.

“So you’re going to show me a parallel version of myself, are you? That’s certainly interesting. The Apocalypse is supposed to happen this year, but to me, waiting a little longer for this is no different from a few more seconds. And if waiting that little bit more can expand the possibilities of my kingdom, I’m not a fool who would give up learning something new and I’m not a coward who would cover her eyes when someone shows it to me. So, Masazumi.”

“Yes?”

“Well.” Yoshitsune kicked the Satou Brothers’ legs below the table. “Let’s deal with the battle of Mikatagahara once you enter Qing-Takeda territory. That way, the Testament Union can’t interfere. And while we’re at it, it might be fun to interpretively use the duels of that battle as the qualifying rounds for this year’s Olympics being held in Hexagone Française.”

“I thank you.”

“No need. ... That word means nothing to me.”

After a quiet laugh, Yoshitsune crossed her legs on top of the table.

“We’ve decided our overall plan. Kantou will accept Musashi, but only once Musashi grows more powerful,” she said. “But the biggest problem is how you will escape the current situation. You can see this, can’t you?”

Yoshitsune indicated the sign frame the Satou Brothers had opened.

Masazumi could indeed see the information written on their sign frame and Tsukinowa quickly opened a sign frame with the same information.

“Maa.”

The information she and Naruze looked at included a statement from Heidi.

Marube-ya: “We’ve got a bit of an emergency here! Neshinbara isn’t any use because he’s too busy taking pictures, so I accepted the information instead. At any rate, we’ve received a notification from the Testament Union.”

It said...

“Hexagone Française is going to attack the Musashi at 3:00 PM tomorrow!”

Heidi had sent Masazumi a notification that the Testament Union had sent Musashi.

It said the following:

“Beginning tomorrow at three o’clock in the afternoon, as long as the Musashi remains in Hexagone Française airspace or on their borders, it will be attacked to eliminate any possible interference with in the history recreation.”

It also included M.H.R.R.’s approval of the contents.

Three o’clock was the shortest guess Heidi had made for when the materials and fuel would be fully loaded on the Musashi. And Neshinbara had made the following prediction:

“I think Hexagone Française will at least give Musashi a chance.”

That left them with a single conclusion.

“So what are we going to do?”

Even if they fled here and made their way to Kantou, the hostile situation with Hexagone Française and the Testament Union would remain. That meant fighting was their only option, but how could they fight? And more importantly...

“What route will the Musashi take to reach Kantou?”

That would be the next central topic of discussion at the restaurant.

Chapter 16: One who Desires a Way Forward

CHAPTER 16

"One who Desires a Way Forward"



Not being able to decide
What to do
Is a sign of having leeway
Point Allocation (Freedom)

Not being able to decide

What to do

Is a sign of having leeway

Point Allocation (Freedom)

Just as the meeting at the IZUMO restaurant had reached a mutual consensus and arrived at what to actually do, everyone was discussing those same issues at the open-air cafeteria on the Musashi.

The central topics were the enemies surrounding the Musashi and how they would break free of them.

And among those who were discussing the information being sent by Masazumi, the color gold suddenly swayed.

It was Mary.

She sat in a chair Asama and the others had brought for her and she tilted her head toward Tenzou.

“Um, Master Tenzou? This seems to have grown complicated, but what are the issues in finding a route for the Musashi?”

“Well,” said Tenzou to the girl sitting next to him.

He opened a sign frame in front of himself to show Mary.

“Um...”

It was not displaying anything yet, but she leaned in to look and fit perfectly along his right arm. Rather than softness, he most felt the pressure and heat of the English uniform pushing at his arm.

...H-how inappropriate! Externally, I can only call this inappropriate! But internally, I must ask for more!

Having such a harsh gap between inside and out is not a good thing, he thought. But since this is all inside, I suppose it doesn't matter.

He then realized he needed to give an explanation and opened a map on the sign frame.

“W-w-w-w-w-w-well, you see, th-th-th-th-this is the areola-...I mean, the area around I-I-IZUMO.”

He felt humiliated as the girls and even Ohiroshiki gave him looks that all but called him hopeless. However, Mary was looking directly at the sign frame.

“Judge. So this is the area around IZUMO.”

...Thank goodness it got through to her.

At any rate, he took a breath, decided to order a drink, saw Mitotsudaira glaring at him, and asked for tea because it was free. But that was fine as having it brought over was valuable in and of itself.

“Anyway, the Musashi is forbidden to travel through M.H.R.R. and Hexagone Française is on the verge of attacking. Given that, where do you think the Musashi should go next, Mary-dono?”

“Return to England,” she said clearly before thinking a bit. “Or head to the northern sea and travel north. Passing over Sviet Rus waters would be going a ways out of our way, but wouldn't it work as an alternate way to reach Kantou?”

“An excellent answer.”

Her scar bent as she smiled. He found that beautiful while he pointed at the map and zoomed in on the area north of IZUMO.

“IZUMO is near the northern coast of Hexagone Française and therefore near England. However...”

“Is there a problem with it?”

“Judge. When focusing entirely on Musashi, it is a good enough answer, but if we return to England now, we would be drawing Hexagone Française and M.H.R.R.’s Catholics to England. And if we did that...”

He hesitated, but said it.

“Even with you onboard, England would have no choice but to sink the Musashi in self-defense.”

Mary looked up in surprise.

“I’m sorry. I think I was relying on my sister without even realizing it.”

“Well, Elizabeth-dono is a reliable individual. If we did go there, I believe she would do whatever she could.”

Mary smiled at that.

“Thank you very much.”

“Think nothing of it,” replied Tenzou while thinking.

...If we did do that, Elizabeth-dono might ask the Testament Union to spare Mary-dono’s life in exchange for England sinking the Musashi.

Do I not want that to happen because I don’t want to give her up? he wondered before changing the subject.

“Um, as for traveling around Sviet Rus, that worries me on the supply line side. Sviet Rus controls the Hokuriku region, so we would be unable to resupply until we reached Ezo.”

“But can’t we use gravitational cruising more freely when travelling over the ocean? If we quickly circled north of the Far East like that, would we even need supplies?”

“I would call that a good idea, but that would be singing my own praises. I have actually already calculated out that plan. The 1st special duty officer is in charge of information, so that is part of my job.”

The others gathered behind him with impressed gasps.

“Ah.”

When Mary noticed them, she pressed even further against him to make room. She was more or less clinging to him now, so he took in a sharp breath. But...

...I-I somehow managed to hold in that shrill gasp!

He then heard a metallic sound from Mary’s hips.

He looked down and saw the two swords of Ex. Collbrande leave their positions at her hips and hover below her chair where they moved up and down a bit.

“Isn’t it cute how they’re like dogs?”

...These divine weapons cut an aerial ship in two, so Mary-dono is simply amazing to treat them like that!

Next, the Excaliburs began to rub up against his shin.

“Oh, my,” said Mary with a quiet laugh. “It looks like they know who the head of the household is.”

“Truly a shocking revelation. Although I get the feeling feeding them will be terribly expensive. ...Also, why do the rest of you look so surprised?”

With a quick “anyway”, he pointed back at the map. It displayed the coast of Hokuriku and a red ribbon line showed the course along the borders from IZUMO to Ezo.

“Along a completely straight course, it is approximately 900 kilometers. However, our course is not straight, so it is closer to 1100 kilometers.”

He then glanced around the area.

...If Toori-dono was here, he would probably say, “Not straight!? So we’re going the gay way!?”

The absence of the idiot threw everyone’s tempo off. He noticed Mitotsudaira, Asama, Adele, and the boys glancing around as well, so they were likely thinking the same thing.

“Anyway,” he said. “When the Musashi travels quickly using both gravitational cruising and inertial cruising, how fast can it move and how long can it keep it up, Naomasa-dono?”

“I already told you yesterday, so why not ignore where you heard it and show off to your wife with how much you know?”

While Mary blushed and shrank down, Tenzou felt her press even further against him and noticed even more gazes on him. He began seriously planning a way to ensure his safety if something happened, but he still continued speaking.

“U-um, if the Musashi’s gravitational cruising is used long term by also using inertial cruising, its average speed is approximately 120 knots which is 210 or so kilometers per hour. And...”

He crossed his arms and realized how hard it was to use his own words to express knowledge given by others.

“Accelerating and then switching to inertial cruising provides about ten minutes of high-speed cruising. Also, any turn in our course, the air current, the atmospheric temperature, or the cargo loaded on the ship can absorb some of the output and lower that speed. But that aside, if the Musashi is prepared for high-speed cruising and is fully loaded with fuel, its limit seems to be about twenty accelerations.”

Mary counted to twenty and then nodded.

“So if they are all used in a row, that’s two hundred minutes or a little over three hours.”

“The momentum of the inertial cruising actually rises with each use, so it will apparently be closer to four hours. That is somewhere between seven and eight hundred kilometers, but...”

The red ribbon line on the map turned blue, starting with IZUMO and moving north. However, the blue began to shake up and down at about two-thirds of the way along the 1100 kilometer line.

“The coast of northern Sviet Rus would be our limit.”

Tenzou took a breath and faced Mary once more.

“Did you suggest England as an alternative because you suspected this was the case?”

“Eh? Oh...Judge.”

She gave a quick nod just as Ohiroshiki spoke up behind them.

“I have an idea. Qing-Takeda and the eastern nations are here for trade, so why not have them hire the Musashi as a transport ship?”

Ohiroshiki sounded like he was trying to persuade the others.

“We can escape to Kantou as a transport ship hired by Qing-Takeda or someone. We were able to fight as mercenaries at England, so it should work. If the Testament Union nations are going to mess with the Musashi, that seems like the best option to me. What do the rest of you think?”

The others nodded and formed a casual scrum.

“It’s because he sometimes has these good ideas that we can’t just throw him behind bars.”

“Tch. He’s been getting carried away lately.”

“If only there wasn’t so much of a problem with the rest of him.”

“Huh!? What kind of position do I hold with you people!? Show me a little more love! Preferably while under the age of ten!”

They all glared at him so he shut up, but a large false arm rose among them. It was Gin’s.

“That would not work. After all, the Musashi was hired by England as a mercenary force. That means you were paid to fight for that master.”

“Yes,” muttered Mitotsudaira while crossing her arms. “Both mercenaries and transport ships are paid money to either fight or carry cargo, but the Musashi decided to fight as a mercenary force when it was already an established transport and trade ship.” She frowned and looked to Gin. “So some nations might not accept our claim that we are simply transporting cargo, right?”

“Judge,” agreed Gin. “At the very least, they would insist the Musashi disarms itself and undergoes surprise cargo inspections. M.H.R.R. is the most likely to do that as they have forbidden it to travel through their land. ...Also, being delayed in that way would be dangerous for the representatives of Qing-Takeda or the eastern nations who are accompanying us. After all, Qing-Takeda will be destroyed by Oda and Houjou will be destroyed by Hashiba. If they decide to hasten those parts of history while the Musashi is defenseless, we will essentially be subjected to a slaughter,” she explained. “Plus, the Musashi won the armada battle and demonstrated its military might, but that has also shown the other nations that they should be wary of the Musashi. If any of them were to suddenly attack the Musashi, they could say it is a dangerous ship and they made a preemptive strike to defend themselves and ensure their own safety. That is just how powerful the result of the armada battle was. You should keep in mind that

the Musashi is no longer a powerless transport ship. The other nations can view it as a threat and as an enemy.”

“But,” said Mary. “IZUMO is supposed to be neutral, so why are Hexagone Française and M.H.R.R. saying we must leave tomorrow or they will attack IZUMO as well?”

She tilted her head.

“This is supposed to be neutral land.”

It was of course Tenzou who nodded at Mary’s question.

He said “I see” and “Are you listening?” before waiting for her to nod.

She did so with a smile.

“Please, go ahead.”

“Judge. ...Um, you actually have a decent understanding of the politics between the different nations, but that is probably adding to your confusion about the Musashi’s situation and position.”

This is something I learned from Masazumi-dono, he thought while manipulating the sign frame.

He had the map display IZUMO at the center.

“The Musashi’s position is a little complicated, okay?”

He zoomed in on IZUMO. Mary leaned forward to look which completely buried his arm between her breasts, so he started reciting sutras in his mind.

He was in a dangerous position because he could hear Asama discussing something with Hanami behind him.

“Um, Hanami? If someone is thinking naughty things during this serious discussion, you can ask our god for a cleanup spell and hit them with a bolt of lightning, okay? Yes, I made a lot of substitutions with the fried rice.”

If he was hit by that in the middle of this meeting, it would be a blot on the Crossunite family until its very last generation. Then again, he would be the very last generation if he died here, so that would not last long. At any rate, he somehow managed to calm himself down.

“W-well, to put it simply, ever since the incident in Mikawa, the Testament Union has had no problems with viewing the Musashi as an enemy. After all, we had a run-in with K.P.A. Italia’s pope chancellor who manages the union. Until that pope-chancellor pardons us, that situation will remain.”

“But this is supposed to be neutral...”

Mary trailed off as she hung her head and thought.

She seemed to have realized what that meant in the middle of her sentence. *That’s Mary-dono for you*, thought Tenzou as she turned a troubled look his way.

“Um, e-excuse me. Am I in the way? Do you need to move your arm?”

“N-n-n-n-n-no, I don’t mind at a-a-a-a-a-a-all.”

“R-really? In that case...”

She leaned even further against him and he made the mistake of extending his arm due to the tension. She was sitting with her knees together and he plunged his arm between her legs up to the wrist.

...*Oh, no!!*

A small sign frame appeared under the left side of his hat’s brim so that Asama could not see it from behind him. It contained Hanami’s words.

“Sh-should I c-clap?”

He frantically shook his head and the sign frame vanished.

“Huh?” whispered Asama. “How strange.”

“N-nothing is strange,” insisted Hanami.

That Mouse had saved him, but his hand was still caught between Mary’s legs and he had no way to escape. Behind him, he heard swords being drawn and firearms being prepared, but he told himself they were all preparing for their training.

Mary, however, was facing his sign frame with a serious look.

“In other words, IZUMO loses its neutrality when it repairs an enemy of the Testament Union?”

“Judge. A defensive interpretation says it is repairing ships of any affiliation because it is neutral, but an offensive interpretation says it is repairing a warship despite being neutral.”

Hexagone Française was claiming the latter.

“Now that it has come to this, no political bargaining will help. They have to choose whether to protect the Musashi or abandon it.”

“And Hexagone Française will not hesitate to attack the Musashi?”

“Judge. Even if it is of questionable validity, they still have a justification for attacking when IZUMO will be caught in the crossfire. And that means we must hurry up and leave port. If we are too slow, the other nations will say we used the neutral ground of IZUMO as a shield.”

So...

“Tomorrow, at three in the afternoon, we must immediately leave once we finish loading the fuel and other crucial items. And then we must fight back against Hexagone Française and make our way to reconciliation.”

There was a further problem as well.

“The real problem is what route to take to Kantou.”

At that point, he heard Adele speak behind him.

“Sorry about all this.”

“Eh?”

Everyone was clearly confused by Adele’s apology and Tenzou turned around along with Mary. Mary turned toward him as she did, so his arm began even more entangled in her body and legs.

...I-I will never forget this day as long as I live!

“Um, Lady Adele? Do you need to say something?”

“No, it’s just that my family came from Hexagone Française.”

“Do not worry,” replied Tenzou. “I am sure this is a difficult situation for Hexagone Française as well.”

“Yes,” agreed Mary. “Musashi has opposed and fought K.P.A. Italia, Tres España, and England. The only major European powers of the Testament Union it has not opposed are Hexagone Française and M.H.R.R., but that means those two nations have not ‘fulfilled their role’ as much as the others.”

She glanced over at him to make sure she was right and he nodded.

She seemed hesitant, but she looked back to Adele and thought for a moment before speaking.

“Um, Hexagone Française must prepare for the Thirty Years’ War and the fight against Hashiba, so they probably hoped Musashi would keep its distance and just pass by. However, M.H.R.R. has forbidden us from passing through its

airspace due to the internal conflict between Catholics and Protestants. As Master Tenzou said, the Musashi cannot travel through the northern sea, so...”

She touched his sign frame and Asama gave a comment.

“Oh, that has shared settings, so you can use it.”

“Thank you,” replied Mary as she manipulated it.

She drew a blue line on the map.

“This must be what Lady Masazumi meant when she said we would go to Mikawa. She was likely prioritizing a route that is shorter than circling around to the north.”

The line travelled down from IZUMO, skimmed Osaka, and continued south.

Tenzou sighed when he saw it.

“That is an insane route, but parts of it do make sense.”

With menu in hand, Sanyou asked a question of Oriotorai who had just ordered some additional edamame.

“Is travelling to Mikawa via the Seto Inland Sea really a good idea, Makiko-san?”

“It’s probably better than running out of fuel in the northern sea or making a suicide run through M.H.R.R.”

Oriotorai opened a sign frame and displayed a map with the Far East’s Seto Inland Sea area in the center.

“The border with Hexagone Française to the west and M.H.R.R. to the east actually drops almost straight down from IZUMO and to the inland sea. And due to the combination of the Far East and the world’s nations, that borderline runs

into K.P.A. Italia which stretches out along the coast. There's also Honganji to the east, but it's a little too far east and can be safely ignored."

She traced her finger down the border between Hexagone Française and M.H.R.R., but had to curve to the east thanks to K.P.A. Italia that jutted in from the west along the coast.

"Do you get it?"

Sanyou shook her head.

"Is the border between those two nations safe?"

"It isn't safe, but it is the shortest route."

"Oh," gasped Sanyou when she caught on and looked back at the map on the sign frame. "If we continue into the Seto Inland Sea, Hexagone Française can't pursue us."

"But we'll almost certainly take damage on the way there."

"That means it's useless."

"Yeah, I know."

Oriotorai gave a bitter smile and the edamame arrived.

"Oh, these haven't been completely thawed yet."

"Some things have a stronger flavor after being frozen than being boiled. But that's beside the point. ...Um, Makiko-san? Even if it's the shortest route, I don't think we can use the Seto Inland Sea," said Sanyou. "After all, Osaka and the Kii Peninsula belong to P.A. Oda. Osaka belongs to P.A. Oda's main force of the Ottomans and the Kii Peninsula belongs to the Allied Mlasi Factions that fall under P.A. Oda's control. It won't be easy putting up with their attacks while we travel."

“Well, there’s a way to get by after reaching the inland sea, but it’s not a great way.”

Oriotorai laughed bitterly.

“You can think of it like using a powerful connection of ours.”

“Eh? Me?”

Those two words came from a boy on a top bunk. He was speaking to a girl sitting in a wheelchair in front of the desk below.

The wheelchair girl brushed a hand through her bangs and looked to the bunk bed.

“Judge. The best way to reach Mikawa from the Seto Inland Sea is for you to act, Azuma.”

“What do you mean, Miriam?”

“Well,” said Miriam while tapping on her cheek with the back of her cokepen. She also reclined the wheelchair to the wall so she and Azuma could see each other’s faces. “To say it without letting any emotion into it, you’re from the imperial family.”

“But I’ve come to live among the people and will eventually receive the Minamoto name.”

“Even so, you are this world’s sole relative of the emperor, who is unaging, who no one has ever seen outside the imperial palace, and who controls the world’s ley lines using the three Imperial Regalia. In other words...” She chose her words carefully while glancing around. “As a relative of the emperor who supports the Divine States, you are a relative of the Divine States themselves.”

I have quite a dangerous person as a roommate, she sighed, but she did not stop there.

“The Far East has a strong religious belief in nature. They respect the four seasons, dedicate crops to their gods, and turn those crops into rice cakes and sake to receive them as gifts from their gods during festivals.”

“Judge. I quite like the different rice cake soups.”

She was glad he did not say he liked the sake. She was not entirely sure what was good about that, but it was at least nice that her roommate was not a drunk. Probably anyway.

“Rice cake!”

The translucent girl climbed onto Miriam’s lap. She had no feeling in her legs, so she closed the sides of the leg portion of the wheelchair to prevent her legs from spreading and making the girl fall through. She grabbed the girl and held her on top of her stomach.

“That belief is also directed toward the emperor. The seasons, the crops, the festivals, and everything else are only here because the emperor maintains the ley lines. An interesting and unique facet of Shintoism is its system of polytheistic worship in which all the gods are connected and thanking one’s resident god and birthplace god will reach the living god that is the emperor. And Azuma, you are the child of that unseen emperor and you can actually show yourself.”

“Eh? What do you mean I show myself?”

He sounded a little troubled, but she answered frankly as there was no point in lying to him.

“People direct their thanks toward you instead of the emperor.”

“Eh? Wait a second.”

Azuma quickly shook his head.

“I’m not the emperor and I’ve never met the emperor. I’ve never met my mother or my father.”

“That doesn’t matter. As I said, the Far East is polytheistic and all of those gods are connected. The same holds for the people. When someone visits their family’s grave, they are visiting the spirits of all their ancestors. In the same way, when someone thanks someone else, they are thanking that person’s family, clan, and ancestors. That connection between ancestral spirits and descendants via the grave is unique to the Far East. And the living have a close connection to those ancestral spirits when the spirits of the dead return during the Bon festival.”

“Really?”

“In most nations, the spirits of one’s ancestors may be worshipped, but it is primarily meant as a way to receive good fortune from them or to give them a peaceful sleep so they are not brought back from the dead. That is why spirits of the dead are referred to as monsters or evil spirits and are thought to be cursed things. Most countries experienced repeated wars and those ideas were put in place to prevent betrayal or grudges after the previous rulers were executed. Those ideas made the spirits of the previous rulers into cursed things that needed to be silenced and put to sleep.”

But...

“The Far East gained an emperor early on and, even if the forces below that were swapped out several times, the owner of the nation remained the emperor. Everything belonged to the emperor, so both the good and the bad were purified as the emperor’s beloved children upon their deaths and they would be put to rest in a portion of the Divine States’ land. In other words, they would become a part of nature.”

“That means I’m...”

“The emperor’s child, but also the child of all the people’s ancestors who were returned to the earth,” finished Miriam. “Listen. To the people, the ancestors that brought them to this age are part of the Divine States’ land and can never be seen

again. After all, they were all ‘people’. But there are also ‘gods’ who are not like them. And you are one of those gods. It doesn’t matter that you’re trying to live as one of us. In fact, trying to live among us might make you seem closer to them and make them adore you even further.”

“Th-that’s kind of scary, Miriam. Let’s stop making assumptions.”

Try to be more of a man, she thought. But...

...Wait. When did I become the manly one of the group?

It must be something that gradual developed over time. No, calm down, Miriam Poqou. This is only a part of your lecture. ...But is lecturing more of a masculine thing to be doing?

“Mama, are you troubled?”

“Eh? Oh, no. I’m fine, I’m fine.”

“M-Miriam, you don’t have to force yourself.”

...Whose fault do you think this is?

“U-um... Anyway, yes. Where is the emperor?”

“Kyou.”

“Yes, and the emperor’s influence is especially strong in Kyou and the Yamato region. ...Do you know where that second one is?”

“Eh?” Azuma thought for a moment and seemed to realize something. “The Yamato region covers Osaka, Sakai, and part of the Nara region.”

“Judge, well done. So once we reach the Seto Inland Sea, you just have to go where anyone can see you. Then we only need to continue west through the skies of Osaka and Sakai. ...Oh, I know. How about we tie you to the bow?”

“But I don’t provide any divine protection like a ship’s figurehead.”

...Why do I feel like I lost this round because he took that seriously?

“Mama, are you feeling sad?”

“Eh? No, not really.”

Anyway...

“Even if we don’t go that far, you just have to appear somewhere visible before we reach land and say something about coming to greet the people of Yamato to thank them for all the help they have given in the past.”

“ ... ”

“Due to your connections to the ancestral spirits and to the emperor who supports the Divine States, the people of the Yamato region won’t show any active aggression against you. Also, Kyou and the Yamato region are controlled by Akechi Mitsuhide who has an understanding with the Imperial Court. If he gives any commands that will harm you, he will lose the entire reason he is in Kyou and Yamato. It’s even possible the various Far Eastern forces who don’t usually get along would form a temporary alliance to punish P.A. Oda for it,” said Miriam. “Now, listen. I don’t know how this will turn out and you can make your own decisions, but I am on your side, Azuma. Still, keep in mind that you can make your own decisions and there is one thing I do know even if I don’t know how this will turn out. That being...”

That being...

“You are the person named Azuma. Remember that.”

“It may be too easy-going on my part, but I want to respect what Azuma decides for himself. But if it comes to it, I will persuade him as vice president,” said Masazumi. “But even so, we will be attacked by Hexagone Française until we reach the Seto Inland Sea and by P.A. Oda until we reach Osaka. The repairs made here in IZUMO will probably all be destroyed again.”

She saw the others at the table cross their arms and nod. Among them, Ujinao turned toward her with her eyes closed.

“By my estimation, the Musashi will take a lot of damage. But it does seem that will be your last resort.”

“Judge. It’s a bit forceful, but we do have a way to reach Kantou. Having any way at all will have a large effect on things to come. Also...”

Also...

“I want you to understand that Musashi can indeed reach Kantou.”

At that point, the naked boy arrived with a tray in both hands. He began serving everyone from that tray.

“Here’s a half serving of toshomen for everyone. ...And Seijun?”

“What?”

“It’s not a good idea to talk about this kind of thing when Imperial Boy himself isn’t here. You can use sign frames now, so try to send the information to him as well. Be as obsessive as a stalker!”

That boy was difficult to handle because he always said the painful things in a way that gave you a way out. Masazumi nodded and lowered her shoulders in a sigh.

“I’ll be more careful next time. I intend to bring the idea to Azuma after seeing if I can come up with any other ideas. Think of this as a last resort.”

“Oh, then I guess I jumped the gun on that one. Sorry. ...Here, this is on me, Seijun.”

He set down a bowl piled high with seaweed and Masazumi saw everyone else quickly avoid eye contact. They all pulled back their bowls and covered them with the opposite hand.

They would be no help, so she turned to the Technohexen next to her.

“Hey, Naruze, can you help me with this sea-... Why are you gulping down your noodles!? Try actually chewing them!”

“Nn! A-ah, that was good! Really good! Okay, *das Ende*! Eh? What? Oh, no! I ate all my noodles without noticing there was seaweed. Oh, well. Masazumi, you eat it all so it doesn’t go to waste!”

The others exchanged a glance and Houjou Ujinao spoke to Satomi Yoshiyori.

“The people of Musashi seem quite harsh to their own.”

“Yes, they have a way of destroying each other. Right, Yoshiyasu?”

“Don’t talk to me! I’m trying to eat! ...Naked boy, you’re a pretty good cook!”

...All of them seem just about as selfish as us.

However, she decided there was no point in continuing down that line of thought. She was glad to have a last resort, but she did not want to make use of a classmate who did not hold an official position if she could avoid it.

...But making these decisions is my job as the vice president.

People could hold a grudge against the vice president, but Musashi would continue on as long as the chancellor and president were untouched. For that reason, she avoided thinking about protecting herself and she let out a sigh.

“If possible, I had wanted to travel through M.H.R.R. territory.”

“What’s this, Seijun? Do you have another idea?”

“It’s more of a hope than an idea.”

After all...

“A lot of M.H.R.R.’s Protestant principalities are anti-Hashiba.”

“Then why don’t you proudly puff out your chest to declare that we’ll- Oh, right, right. I forgot,” said the naked boy.

...Don’t say that while staring at my chest. And get back to eating, Satomi Yoshiyasu.

“I’ll explain,” said Masazumi. “M.H.R.R. has yet to split between Catholic and Protestant due to the Thirty Years’ War. I had hoped to go to the Protestant principalities and gain an ally by promising to support them once the split happened...but that probably isn’t going to happen. After the internal split due to the Thirty Years’ War, history dictates that the Catholic side will crumble and truly lose the war. And given the future of M.H.R.R., the Protestants won’t want to reach the recreation of that split either.”

“Hm? Does M.H.R.R.’s split include some dramatic history recreation?”

“Yes,” said Masazumi with a nod. While thinking that the contents of her bowl were going to get cold, she spoke to the naked boy. “That split is related to a certain incident in the Thirty Years’ War and those involved want to avoid its recreation.”

“A certain incident? What’s that?”

“The Sack of Magdeburg,” said Naruze.

She sighed, stopped making her storyboard, and looked at the others.

“M.H.R.R.’s Protestant principalities contain a lot of commercial printers and Magdeburg is the European city we have print for us. However, a dangerous part of history occurs there.”

“It isn’t a pleasant story,” said the Technohexen quietly. “Magdeburg is the capital of the Protestant state of Saxony and it was captured and plundered by a force of its own nation’s soldiers led by the brave Commander Tilly, a Catholic.”

“The Sack of Magdeburrr?”

Tenzou noticed Mary had misspoken without realizing it.

It seemed everyone but her had noticed, but...

“ ... ”

...They overlooked it! That's the right thing to do, but they would've been completely merciless if it had been me!

At any rate, Tenzou accepted it as proof of how wonderful Mary was. He noticed Naito waving at him and the black Technohexen gestured a message to him:

“Don't worry. She's different from you. The rules for busty blondes are different!” It was a bit of a mystery how she communicated so much via hand gestures, but he made up his mind regardless.

“Um, the Sack of Magdeburg was when Commander Tilly's army, the main force of M.H.R.R.'s Catholics, made an example of some...uncooperative Protestants. The army surrounding Magdeburg numbered thirty thousand. There were just as many residents of the city, but the fighting reduced that number to only five thousand. All of the survivors were women and children, but they were treated as spoils of war and Tilly's army...” He chose his words carefully. “They *treated them violently*.”

“Eh?”

Mary's expression grew stern, she gulped, and she turned her slightly pale face toward him.

“You mean they punched and kicked them? How could they be so cruel to women and children!?”

Tenzou saw that the others were left absolutely speechless by her words.

...What a refreshing response!!

They all expressed that idea through eye contact.

However, Asama alone let out a voice.

“Eh?”

Everyone slowly turned to look at her instead.

“Eh!? Ah! That didn’t count! It didn’t! First pass!”

She stuck a purifying tamagushi into Mitotsudaira’s and Kimi’s hair and Kimi stood up on the other side of Mary.

She turned Uzy’s sign frame into a large card and placed it so only they could see what was written on it:

“Rayp! Gang rayp! Or call it sexxl asolt!”

...What good does it do if you refuse to spell it right!? And I’m not even sure how you’re supposed to pronounce that last one! Is this Kimi-dono’s unique way of showing embarrassment?

With that thought, Tenzou got back to his explanation.

“Anyway, it had the opposite effect. The Protestant principalities gathered together against the Catholic principalities and M.H.R.R. split between Catholic and Protestant. This caused great change in their attitude concerning the Thirty Years’ War and it was the turning point that led to M.H.R.R. losing that war. And for that reason,” he said. “The history recreation has yet to be carried out.”

“So M.H.R.R. has gained a less-than-solid but still balanced position through negotiations, Sakai-sama? Over.”

“That’s right.” Sakai’s words were formed of smoke that spilled into the sky.

“Saxony sheltered Luther, leader of the Reformation, from the Catholics and acted as the flag-bearer for M.H.R.R.’s Protestants.”

“You seem quite familiar with this. Over.”

“When I fought the pope-chancellor long ago, they helped me out. M.H.R.R.’s Protestant principalities are part of the route from Qing-Takeda, right? I would circle around north while watching Lake Biwa which wasn’t enclosed in a stealth barrier at the time. On the way back, I could also travel down to the Seto Inland Sea and travel west along Shikoku or something.”

“In other words, we are once more making use of the route that you fought your way through in the past. Who would have thought you would cause double the trouble by influencing the next generation? Over.”

“C’mon now.” Sakai smiled bitterly. “I’m not causing any trouble, ‘Musashi’-san. ...Anyway, a lot has changed since back then. Hashiba wasn’t around yet in my day and M.H.R.R. was at odds with P.A. Oda. The other nations were a lot different too.” He looked to the fleets surrounding them in the sky. “Hexagone Française was fighting their wars of religion between their own Catholics and Protestants. And now that they’ve gotten that taken care of, the anger inside their own nation is being turned toward the Thirty Years’ War. They really are growing into a major power.”

“And picking a fight with that growing power and fighting them all the way to the Seto Inland Sea is currently our worst yet only option? Over.”

“It looks that way, but it won’t be easy.”

“That is why I said it was the ‘worst’ option. Over.”

“True.” Sakai looked up into the sky. “But I wonder how it will turn out.”

“What do you mean?”

A lot of smoke spilled from both corners of his mouth as he formed what could be called a smile.

“There’s someone here who helped me when I would head out to the inland sea.”

“Here? Over.”

“Yes, here. As in, they’ve arrived here. Look.”

He pointed to one point in the sky.

“He’s definitely going to stick his nose in our business. That’s just the kind of person he is. I’d wondered if he would show up, and here he is. And I’m certain he intends to cause trouble.”

“Anyway,” said Houjou Ujinao. “Even in the worst case, Musashi can pass through the Yamato region and approach Qing-Takeda territory. Even if it may mean passing through P.A. Oda’s Middle Eastern territory.”

“If it comes to that, Qing-Takeda will help by beginning the recreation of Mikatagahara. Once that’s established, we can say anyone pursuing you is interrupting the history recreation. So…”

Yoshitsune used one of her heels propped up on the table to kick at the eastern base of the Kii Peninsula on the sign frame.

“Make your way here. If you do, I’ll be waiting a little more toward Mount Fuji on the opposite coast. And that’ll act as my retirement ceremony as far as the Takeda side is concerned.”

“Then,” added Houjou Ujinao. “We will help from east of Odawara to Edo.”

“Thank you.”

Masazumi lowered her head as if nodding and Satomi Yoshiyori spoke up.

“To be honest, I think you’ll be fine emphasizing the presence of the crown prince. Kyou and the Yamato region are controlled by Akechi Mitsuhide whose position gives him the second-most influence within P.A. Oda and takes care of Nobunaga’s visits to the capital. He can’t exactly attack a ship that has the crown prince aboard.”

“And what if he does?”

A sudden voice filled the restaurant.

Jonson looked up in surprise from where he was drinking with Aoi in another part of the restaurant.

He was supposed to be the observer, but...

“Where are the guards!?”

Masazumi heard hurried footsteps approach from outside.

Those were the guards England had placed around the restaurant.

...If they didn't notice...

“Oh, don't worry about it. I just have a few tricks I can use, is all.”

The voice came from near the entrance and it approached as its owner walked forward.

Everyone else took action.

First, the Sanada ninja slowly appeared from behind chairs or tables and formed the front line.

Next, Satomi Yoshiyori, Yoshiyasu, and Houjou Ujinao rose from their chairs a bit.

At that point, someone spoke.

It was Sanada ninja #3 Miyoshi Seikai Nyuudou. His large demonic body was crammed into a chair and he bowed toward Yoshitsune.

“I recognize that voice. You too should-...”

“Yeah, it’s just been so long that it took me a moment.”

Yoshitsune spoke into the darkness with a sharpness in her eyes but a smile on her lips.

“I haven’t seen you since the incident with Sakai.”

“I’m honored that the ruler of the world remembers me.”

Before Masazumi could tilt her head in confusion, the figure entered the light.

She saw a slender old man. He wore a Far Eastern uniform with a blue coat over it.

“P.A. Oda!?”

“Yes, you could say that,” said the old man. “I belong to P.A. Oda, I control the Kii Peninsula, and I’m chancellor of the Allied Mlasi Factions. My name is Matsunaga Danjou Hisahide.”

Chapter 17: Demander of the Wasteland

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"Demander of the Wasteland"



If destruction and creation
Are not two sides of the same coin
Then what are they?
Point Allocation (Era)

If destruction and creation

Are not two sides of the same coin

Then what are they?

Point Allocation (Era)

Sanada, Satomi, Houjou, and England prepared for a fight, but the elderly man named Hisahide laughed.

“Ha ha. Yeah, this’ll get me killed. Masayasu, Lady Yoshitsune, can you call them off?”

Miyoshi Seikai averted his gaze and stared into the distance with his demonic glare.

“I now go by the name Seikai instead of Masayasu. Anything involving you will only bring trouble.”

“Don’t just deny your exciting days of youth killing the shogun with me. Wasn’t that anarchy just the best? ... Surely you agree too, Lady Yoshitsune.”

“Why are you here, brat?”

“You have to ask? Of course I’m here to cause trouble. That’s my specialty.”

“You sure are crafty,” she muttered while waving for the Sanada ninja to sit.

Masazumi gasped as Matsunaga casually walked toward her.

...This man was pretty crazy, wasn’t he?

He was a commander from two generations before them.

However...

“Masazumi, isn’t Matsunaga Hisahide...?”

Just as she thought Naruze also understood the implications, she noticed the Technohexen was looking at a divine network store.

“He’s the guy who wrote the Far Eastern erotic instruction manual ‘Instructions on Sexual Techniques?’, isn’t he!?”

“That’s me. An abridged version was made into a porn game with the abbreviated title ‘Sex Tech?’ and it sold like crazy. Unfortunately, that got the Testament Union after me twice as much. ...See? I’m not gonna do anything bad here.”

“Are you serious, you brat?”

Yoshitsune gestured him away with the bottom of her foot, but he brought a chair over from the counter. That was when Aoi noticed him from the kitchen.

“Ah! Is that Hisahide from the porn game group Joke!?”

Hearing his name, Hisahide turned toward the naked boy in the kitchen.

After a pause, he clapped his hands together.

“Oh. Oh? Oh! It’s that connoisseur of a kid who comes by every year!”

Everyone tilted their heads at the fact that he knew the boy, but Masazumi hung her head.

...Why does that idiot have so many acquaintances like this?

Meanwhile, Hisahide pointed at the idiot.

“This kid doesn’t have a clue what makes something good or bad or what makes it valuable or not, but whenever he chooses something to buy at an event, it always sells like crazy later. ‘Sex Tech?’ only started selling once he bought it and his review got around.”

“That’s because I don’t have any money, so I have to choose really carefully.”

“Wait a second, idiot. Then what’s all that piled up in the student council room?”

“Don’t be stupid. That’s from my normal budget. We’re talking about my emergency budget here. They’re two different things!”

He raised his right thumb and the representatives of the eastern nations all gave her expressionless looks. Her only choice was to lower her head and shrink down.

...I can’t stand this terribly unfair attention.

This was entirely that idiot’s fault, but...

“Hey, Hisahide. Why are you here? There isn’t an event here, is there?”

“What? Oh, I’m just greeting some old friends.”

“Who? Oh, you mean that big demonic guy and little Yoshitsune? You know them?”

It looked like the two of them were actually communicating.

...Then is this a useful connection after all?

Hisahide must have decided to speak at the counter because he sat in a chair there.

He took a teacup of sake from Aoi and glanced down at it.

“Don’t you have anything better? I thought this was IZUMO.”

“Master, this is an English restaurant,” explained Jonson.

“Then can you bring out a proper cup? ...Well, that can wait until later.”

Hisahide took a plate of grilled chicken Aoi had cooked and turned toward Masazumi.

“If I’m right, you’re planning to pass through the Yamato region using the crown prince’s presence on the Musashi. That’s more or less what Hashiba and Takenaka predicted. And so...”

He ate one piece of chicken and held up the bamboo skewer that’s tip was now visible.

“Since I have a force near there, I’m in charge of sinking the Musashi. I can ignore what the emperor wants, after all. Isn’t that right?” He laughed. “That’s why I’m here for a greeting. Yes, a greeting. I want to see how valuable and how much fun the target of my destruction is.”

...So that really is why he’s here!!

Masazumi mentally gulped and thought on the man’s history.

Matsunaga Danjou Hisahide was in charge of the large Kii Peninsula and he was currently under P.A. Oda’s command.

On the non-Far Eastern side, he controlled the allied factions of the Abbasid Caliphate’s descendants that ruled the south of the Middle East after splitting off from P.A. Oda’s Ottoman Caliphate that was closer to Europe.

...But how he ended up there is completely insane.

Matsunaga Hisahide had originally been a retainer of the Miyoshi clan which ruled western Shikoku and Kinai, which had Kyou at the center.

And along with the leaders of the Miyoshi clan, he had held back the shogun clan.

But after the death of Miyoshi Nagayoshi, head of the Miyoshi clan, Hisahide had realized the shogun clan was going to oppose him.

...So he assassinated Ashikaga Yoshiteru, the thirteenth shogun.

On top of that, he had opposed the top Miyoshi retainers and burnt down Todai-ji's Great Buddha Hall when they hid inside it.

The killing of a shogun, the leader of all warriors since the Kamakura period, by a lower commander had been the event to begin the Sengoku period. And the burning of the temple had emphasized to the people that the authority of Buddhism meant nothing in this time of strife.

However...

Novice: "Eh!? Matsunaga-sama's there!? I really want to greet him! Not only because of his independent porn games, but because he's amazing in so many ways! I want his signature if possible!"

Vice President: "Just get to sleep."

That said, she did understand Neshinbara's excitement.

...This man is completely insane.

There were differing opinions about whether he had actually been responsible for the assassination of the shogun or the burning of Toudai-ji.

However, *this Matsunaga* had undoubtedly done them.

He feared no one and did not hesitate to do anything.

He would smash the traditional way of thinking and use destruction to create a new era more to his liking.

He was a free destroyer and he did as he pleased.

He likely felt a connection with Nobunaga who had burned Mt. Hiei.

For example, Matsunaga had entered under Nobunaga's command once Nobunaga had established a new shogun, but once Matsunaga found something he did not like, he rebelled against Nobunaga.

Nobunaga forgave him, but why had he done that?

...Nobunaga was known as a demon lord, so he must have felt a connection to another destroyer like Matsunaga.

Based on the generations they belonged to, Matsunaga had been a destroyer longer than Nobunaga. Masazumi guessed that they respected each other for how they did not fear anything.

However...

Novice: “Matsunaga-sama serves the people in his territory well and he’s a cultured man who collects tea sets, established some early tea ceremony practices, and was the first in the Far East to celebrate Christmas.”

Marube-ya: “He was also involved in designing the Musashi, wasn’t he?”

Musashi: “Judge. A row house structure is used for the residential areas in the wide blocks, but that method of constructing multiple small apartment-like houses in a row was based on the rows of residential towers used to defend Matsunaga-sama’s castle. Over.”

That was exactly right. He had also encouraged advancements in medical techniques and was the first to design modern fortresses.

Demoted Man: “It was those connections that let me get some help from him way back when. He was under P.A. Oda’s command, but he wasn’t simply an enemy because he had some distance from P.A. Oda itself. When the Musashi escaped from Mikawa and entered the Seto Inland Sea, we travelled along the borders between P.A. Oda and his land.”

They were receiving a lot of extraneous messages, but that was just how much everyone knew of this man.

According to those that researched the Testament descriptions, he had done a lot for the Sengoku period’s way of life, way of thinking, culture, and civilization.

...They either call him a pioneer or a mind reader.

The problem in the current era was how he demonstrated by example what was allowable and what other ways there were to solve a problem.

Because of that, Masazumi knew why he had arrived while the Musashi was surrounded.

She turned to him and opened her mouth.

“So even if he is part of the imperial family, Matsunaga Hisahide, shogun killer and burner of Todai-ji, only sees him as someone else to attack?”

“If I kill him, he’ll die, won’t he?”

The immediacy of his reply and what it implied made Masazumi gasp.

“Ha ha,” he laughed. “C’mon. You’re planning to bring out the crown prince and go flying through the Yamato region. That means you’re using him. But I don’t remember hearing anything about me ‘using’ him in my own way.” He showed his teeth in a smile. “To put it another way, as long as you understand that I’ll ‘use’ the crown prince too, then you can go ahead and use him without fear. Basically, it comes down to who can use him better. Right?”

“Wait, wait,” said Aoi while holding out a plate of octopus dressed with vinegar and ginger. “Hisahide, we’ve had our hands full with Imperial Boy since he learned about sex recently, so try not to interfere too much.”

After descending to the bottom bunk, Azuma watched his sign frame along with Miriam who sat in her wheelchair. He could almost hear his face growing pale.

Miriam silently rolled her wheelchair back with the girl in her arms.

He was afraid to turn around, but waiting would only increase the amount of destructive power according to the equation “destructive power x time (seconds) x misunderstanding”.

...I recently managed to figure out at least that much!!

While wondering how to explain this, he gathered his courage and turned around.

“U-um, Miriam?”

She had the side of her wheelchair turned toward him and was refusing to look at him. She instead rocked the wheelchair and spoke to the girl in her arms.

“You see, they just said they have had their hands full since papa learned about sex.”

“Is everyone getting along?” asked the girl.

“It’s like a group command in an RPG. Of course, I’ve never seen an RPG with the command ‘Let’s go have sex!’. But – ha ha – what exactly does he mean by ‘everyone getting along’? That perverted imperial certainly is passionate about gaining descendants who will revere him and turn him into an ancestral spirit.”

...But ??? was the one that mentioned everyone getting along! Wh-what am I supposed to do, god!? Oh, I’m a half-god, aren’t I!? So if I can’t do anything about it, is it hopeless!? Is it all over!?

Azuma realized praying to a god was not going to help.

...When a god’s having trouble, he has to solve it on his own, doesn’t he?

“Um, Miriam? I think you’re mistaken about something.”

“What would that be?” she replied with a giant smile on her face.

“D-don’t say that with a smile! A-and they’re in a meeting! H-how should I put this? Let’s ignore Aoi-kun’s strange jokes and focus on the Musashi’s future!”

“Fine then.”

Miriam glared at him, sighed, and rolled her wheelchair back. It did not seem her doubts had been fully dispelled, so he also sighed and showed her the sign frame.

Self-Destructor: “Hold up. You mean the crown prince has been going at it a like a monkey since he learned about sex?”

Me: “Yeah. During a meal, he kept saying sex this and sex that and he was asking Black Mal to teach him all about it. And this was in front of everyone! That’s an imperial for you! Right, Black Mal?”

Mal-Ga: “Now that’s something I didn’t want to be reminded of. And it was right in the middle of our yakiniku too.”

“Ah! Miriam! Don’t leave! Please don’t leave!!”

‘Now, what will you do?’ asked Matsunaga.

Masazumi tried to decide what she needed to think about first.

Whether to make an enemy of Matsunaga or not? What to do about Azuma? Or should she ask the eastern nations what they thought? Or...

...*Oh.*

She arrived at the answer.

“Lord Matsunaga, to start with, I would like to thank you.”

“Wait, and why is that? I don’t really like being thanked.”

“It was your appearance and words that helped me realized there’s no more important problem than this.”

That was exactly right.

“We are forbidden to travel through M.H.R.R. and we are surrounded. We have heard a variety of ideas as to how to deal with that, but the end has finally come into sight.”

That being...

“Lord Matsunaga, if we can make our way past the issue of engaging you in battle, our destination will be in reach.”

“You mean...?”

“Judge,” she replied. “You will be waiting for us at the end of all this and we will defeat you. That is our objective.”

“Nicely said.”

Masazumi watched Matsunaga speak.

“But,” he continued. “I’m pretty good at this kind of thing. I’ll use my aerial warship Shigisan. Look.”

He pointed at a silhouette in the southern sky behind him.

...A spider?

Novice: “Wow! That really is Shigisan far off in the sky there! It’s a Hiragumo-type aerial warship made from connecting eight Kraken-class ships to a Jormungandr-class ship! I need to get some video of it tomorrow morning. Do you want some footage, Shakespeare?”

Four Eyes: “Not really, but I’ll still take it as it might be useful for reference material.”

Wise Sister: “Wow! Just look at all this passion! It’s heating up the air around here! And it smells so fresh and immature! Just like an edible chrysanthemum! It’s an herb!!”

...Too many people are cutting into this chat and I don’t even know what they’re talking about anymore.

However, there was nothing Masazumi could do about it. This was likely the norm on the divine network of a neutral city. She just hoped Tsukinowa did not pick up any odd words.

At any rate, she took a breath and spoke.

“Anyway, we would be honored to have you as our final boss, Lord Matsunaga. After all, you’re as much of a destroyer as you’re rumored to be and you won’t hesitate to attack even with Azuma onboard. But...”

“But? But what?”

“Judge. I feel like this would still be too boring for you.”

“What?” He tilted his head. “Why is that? It sounds right up my alley.”

“True.”

She nodded and continued on while thinking this was a lot like messing with the lit fuse of a bomb.

“However,” she said. “K.P.A. Italia, Tres España, England, and starting tomorrow both Hexagone Française and M.H.R.R. have not hesitated to attack the Musashi despite Azuma’s presence. After all, they aren’t Far Eastern.”

In other words...

“What you’re trying to do is already completely normal in Europe.”

This is a lot like a trick question, thought Masazumi.

After all, the nations of Europe had faced them as members of the Testament Union and not as Far Eastern forces, so they had not needed to take a Far Eastern stance.

Their citizens might have their own feelings, but Azuma himself accepted that he was living a normal life now. There was no problem in treating him like a normal human save for those feelings.

To the European forces, he was nothing but another citizen.

Masazumi had only planned to use him to travel through the Yamato region because that land belonged to Akechi Mitsuhide who also managed Kyou. And their intention had not been to foment rebellion among the people there.

...We were trying to shake up Akechi's position.

But if Matsunaga wished for a confrontation, things changed.

“Your choice to oppose us is a truly wonderful decision as a Far Eastern commander, but the European nations have already reached that level.”

“Are you saying I’m behind the times?”

“Judge.”

Vice President: “Everyone, prepare yourselves for our decision here.”

“You could say that *we can reach Kantou as long as we defeat you*. And we would have the justification of protecting our former imperial citizen from a rebel attempting to kill the crown prince.”

“That’s dirty.” Hisahide smiled. “That’s just playing dirty. I mean, you’re saying killing the crown prince is wrong, but you’re also saying he’s a normal citizen. So which is it? You’d essentially be killing the crown prince as well.”

“No, we wouldn’t. We would simply be accepting the difference in viewpoint.”

Also...

“Just because he becomes a normal citizen does not mean Azuma has ‘died’. He’s enjoying his life. You see him smiling while he holds a little girl’s hand and visits the cafeteria.”

“You sure he’s not just a pedophile? Don’t tell me it’s like the Tale of Genji.”

“Judge. I sometimes wonder the same thing. But there’s nothing to worry about. He’s a normal citizen now, so he can be locked up if anything happens.”

“Wait! Um, Miriam! Miriam! Honda-kun sometimes says a little too much, too!”

At any rate, this is a difference in viewpoint, thought Masazumi.

How was Azuma viewed politically?

She had learned all about that kind of personal difference in viewpoint during her exchange with Yoshitsune. There were many different viewpoints that depended on how someone interpreted things.

...And it isn’t a politician’s job to unify that.

She did not think it was everyone’s viewpoints she needed to unify. It was the people who held those many viewpoints that she needed to unify.

...What should I do?

She suddenly thought about Nobunaga.

Nobunaga had control over Akechi Mitsuhide, who sided with the Imperial Court and protected Kyou and Yamato, as well as this villainous man named Matsunaga Danjou Hisahide, so what kind of person was he?

She was curious.

The major powers of Europe were unified not by their own personalities but by their consensus on the precepts of the Testament and on the history recreation. They would swear on the power of the Testament.

Qing-Takeda had entrusted everything to the will of an always existing ruler.

In that case, what kind of person was Nobunaga?

“...”

Masazumi glanced toward Aoi. He was an idiot, he was naked, and, although she had never seen him do a bit with partially removed clothes, he would likely do it eventually. All of that was a pain, but it did not really matter. Or did that mean it did matter?

At any rate, the most important fact was how open-minded he was.

...I guess the same goes for us.

She wanted to think no one was simply a stereotype, but she was likely subconsciously favoring what those close to her said and that could make her ignorant of the larger world. *That will be something to work on from now on*, she thought while speaking aloud.

“Lord Matsunaga, you were the first to celebrate Christmas in the Far East, but that was nothing more than copying the West. Is referring to a copy as ‘new’ a form of irony meant to make your followers laugh?”

“Wait, wait. It looks like you really do understand.” Hisahide smiled bitterly. “I’m the type that can’t hold back when provoked, you know?”

“Then I will say even more.”

Masazumi raised her eyebrows in a smile of her own.

...I have to draw his interest.

He was their opponent. Not the *other force* he represented, but Matsunaga Danjou Hisahide himself.

Novice: “It’s too bad, but this is a good decision. After all, having a clear enemy eliminates most of the uncertain factors. I’ll do as much as I can from here to investigate his fortress, the Shigisan, hovering in the southern sky.”

“Please do,” was all Masazumi sent back before addressing Matsunaga once more. “If we do end up engaging each other in battle, I want you to do so according to your own point of view. After all, the route we will use is the same one as when we escaped Mikawa and entered the Seto Inland Sea.”

“Running into Shibata’s ship then was fun, wasn’t it?”

Asama: “So Lord Matsunaga really was involved in setting up that greeting or encounter.”

Musashi: “I have statistically determined that was a great embarrassment for us. Over.”

Can an automaton really determine things like that? wondered Masazumi before looking directly at Matsunaga.

“Will you allow us to travel that same route in order to gain new power, Lord Matsunaga?”

And...

“When we do, make sure you prepare the Kōtenmyō Hīragumo.”

That line brought everyone to a stop.

“Musashi” stirred up the night air as she replied to Masazumi’s words.

“When she says the Kōtenmyō Hīragumo, does she mean what I think she does? Over.”

“Judge.” Sakai nodded. “That’s related to Lord Matsunaga’s death. In the history from the Age of the Gods, it was a famous Far Eastern tea kettle known as the Hiragumo. I was actually shown it in secret once.”

He used a hand to draw an ellipse about the size of a human head and he traced his fingers from the top and around it.

“It’s a tea kettle like this. It’s made of iron and has a hole in the center of the lid like a pot.”

“Like this?”

“Musashi” scanned the movements of his fingers and produced an image in a sign frame.

“Yes, yes. Like that. But the handles coming down from the top look like spider legs and the lid is a little lower. ...Yes. It’s more or less exactly like that.”

“Is it more or less like that or exactly like that? Over.”

“Anyway,” said Sakai. “When Lord Matsunaga rebelled against Nobunaga, Hashiba and some other forces surrounded Shigisan Castle. Yet Nobunaga said he would forgive him if he handed over the Kotenmyou Hiragumo, so you can see how unique a tea kettle it is.”

But...

“Lord Matsunaga refused and committed suicide. He blew up Shigisan Castle’s central tower with himself and the Kotenmyou Hiragumo inside.”

“_____ Over.”

“Thanks for so faithfully expressing your surprise, ‘Musashi’-san. Anyway, the Kotenmyou Hiragumo is like the fireworks decorating the end of his life. ...And with him, using a spider for decoration may be appropriate. At any rate, it’s a symbol of all that. No matter how absurd his actions get, it will all end when he

blows himself up along with the Hiragumo. That's why he made that ominous imagery his own."

A spider-like aerial warship hovered in the southern sky. It was made from a long ship in the center and eight smaller ships attached around that one.

"The Shigisan is both his castle and an aerial warship. He personally gave it the descriptor 'Hiragumo-type'. It can't move much, but it has excellent defensive abilities. He quite likes fighting, so it would probably be a pain to battle him. Masazumi-kun might be better off not choosing a route from the Seto Inland Sea."

"Fine then."

Masazumi heard Matsunaga give approval rather than rejection.

He faced her and Aoi.

"Now this is interesting. I'd always thought it would be Hashiba who would surround me and make me set off my fireworks. I certainly never expected it to be Matsudaira who opposes Hashiba. This is a first!"

"Hold up, Hisahide. Don't get carried away and die, okay? You've still got three chapters left in your 48 chapter series."

"That's gone on too long already, so what does it matter? But on that note, what do you think was the best chapter?"

"Probably Chapter 37's imprisoning of the shogun and doing him from the back and the front."

...Right. Thirteenth Shogun Ashikaga Yoshiteru was so unparalleled in skill that they wrapped him in tatami mats so he couldn't move and stabbed him from four directions in order to kill him.

“ ‘Don’t assassinate meeeee!’ won last year’s award for best line of dialogue, didn’t it? A priest at Kiyomizu wrote it with a giant brush under the heading ‘This Year’s Dialogue’.”

...What kind of award is that?

But once Matsunaga finished discussing the unpleasant world of men, he finally turned back to Masazumi.

“That’s definitely interesting. This means there are people on the Musashi, a ship I was a design advisor for, who can oppose me. I had thought no one like Sakai was left in the Far East.”

“Principal Sakai is still doing just fine and those of us below him are the same as him, Lord Matsunaga. Also, we have a bit of a reason for using your route.”

Masazumi placed a hand on the map displayed on their table and brought up the Kii Peninsula.

“As I stated earlier, we used your land’s northern provisional border to cut east to west across the Kii Peninsula when escaping Mikawa. Back then, a group of armed merchant ships from Tres Portugal was also travelling from the east, so you let us through. Your territory belongs to P.A. Oda, but it is more strongly associated with the allied peoples there, you have never gone out of your way to oppose the Testament Union, and the various factions below you are arranged along the national borders. We were thankful to have that route back then.”

“In other words, you wanted to revisit old times before continuing on to Kantou?”

“That’s right,” honestly admitted Masazumi. “In the approximately two months since then, the Testament Union has made Mikawa neutral ground (partially to create a bridgehead against P.A. Oda), but Mikawa will have changed in that time. I think we need to see that for ourselves.”

“Then I need to do my best to keep you from passing through there.”

I’d really rather you didn’t, she thought.

After all, the Musashi's stealth cruising would not work. If it had indeed been Lord Matsunaga's doing that Shibata Katsuie's ship had run across them while using it, it meant he had a way to detect stealth.

Gold Mar: "If we're going through there, we'll have to rush through with our gravitational cruising. We'll have to be careful with the course marker."

That's right, thought Masazumi just before Matsunaga placed some money on the counter.

He casually stood from his seat, but the action was so sudden that the Sanada ninja were slow to react. #3 Miyoshi Seikai Nyuudou suddenly looked up.

"Matsunaga!"

"What? Do you want me to trick you and use you again?"

"No," replied Miyoshi Seikai. "That is exactly why I do not wish to fight you."

"How is that a problem? You just have to travel east with Lady Yoshitsune there. And Musashi Vice President, you haven't decided for sure if you're coming my way, right?"

"Judge. That is a last resort to keep as insurance. After giving more thought to our military strength, we will choose our route. ...What I *can* say is that the eastern nations will only be travelling ahead of us and covering for us later, so the Musashi will be on its own until we arrive there. To put it another way, the eastern nations are unlikely to know what route we chose or where we are until we arrive at the rendezvous point."

"So it's all up to your adlib decisions? Hey, naked connoisseur, your vice president is a pretty dangerous girl."

Hearing that, Aoi pulled a piece of frosted glass from somewhere and placed it between them like a partition. Behind it, he spoke in a fake high-pitched voice.

“Well, you see... I am always being subjected to domestic violence. She always strips me naked and-...”

“Enough indirect complaints and lies. And say I subject you to domestic violence again and I’ll knock you to the ground.”

“Th-that’s the problem right there! You’re always hurting me! Why is it always me you attack!?”

“To choose my words carefully so I don’t hurt you, I’ll just say that one mosquito in particular is especially annoying.”

“How poetic!” exclaimed Jonson as Matsunaga lightly waved a hand.

“Anyway, I’ll set up something interesting for you. Musashi Vice President, you were told to leave IZUMO by three tomorrow, right? But how about you wait until...let’s say 3:15.”

“Fifteen extra minutes?”

Novice: “That’s plenty of time for the Musashi to get really damaged. Ask him why.”

But even as everyone else looked up in surprise, Hisahide was already leaving the restaurant.

“Lord Matsunaga.”

“Just wait. I promise you it’ll be interesting.” He smiled. “Oh, and one other thing. Lady Yoshitsune, don’t give them any hints. Like the one the two of us know so well. Okay?”

“...”

Yoshitsune crossed her arms but suddenly slammed her heel against the table and clenched her teeth.

“So that’s it!!”

After he laughed and disappeared outside, Yoshitsune practically jumped to her feet.

“Honestly, what a troublesome man. Anyway, Masazumi.”

With her eyebrows still raised, she turned toward Masazumi.

“I’m heading back, but remember one thing. You’ll probably be lonely without me, but make sure you wait until 3:15 tomorrow.”

“I feel like there’s some kind of misunderstanding, but why?”

“I can’t say. It’s not my style to tell you when I’m still uncertain about some things. But it’s definitely worth checking on. If that brat was hinting at what I think he was...” Yoshitsune looked outside. “Musashi will gain a troublesome yet cooperative ally and an incomparably powerful enemy.”

Inside a dim cathedral, the Papa-Schola sighed with Galileo behind him.

The *cornice firma* in front of them displayed footage of a restaurant in IZUMO sent by a spy on the PR Committee. Yatsufusa currently stood in front of the building.

“So Matsunaga has left. As a part of P.A. Oda, he’s probably in charge of a portion of M.H.R.R.’s surrounding fleet, but isn’t it just like that reckless man to stop by without permission? Hm?”

“I was a peaceful teacher while you all were young and enjoying yourselves. Former boy, is he as much of a lifelong enemy as Principal Sakai to you?”

“Even if I tried to make him my lifelong enemy, he’d just slip away. He’s hard to deal with because he acts like a clown and yet has real skill when it comes to a fight. When he was with Miyoshi, he even outdid me at Mediterranean trade a few times. The most irritating part was how he would then show up with a nice plan to make money together.”

“So he has a merchant’s mind? Does he act based on gains and losses and on his interest in new trends?”

“It seems that way.”

Innocentius grabbed a bottle of water from the side table and drank some through the corner of his mouth.

“We didn’t get most of the sound, but it looked like they hit it off fairly well. If the Lord/Retainer Committee’s air official is free, have him predict the five most likely routes for the Musashi. And have him also look into the route I’ll mention later.”

“Do you know of a secret route, former boy?”

“If Matsunaga’s on the move, the odds of them using that route are pretty good. He likes to push things in the direction that he finds interesting, so if he’s taken a liking to Musashi, he won’t let it be destroyed so easily. That’s his style as the destroyer.”

“His style?”

“Testament,” replied Innocentius. “The destroyer always seeks to cause the greatest destruction. Think about the shogun and Todai-ji. One was the symbol of warriors and the other of Buddhism. That’s why he’ll treat Musashi carefully.”

After all...

“Musashi is the symbol of the Far East.”

“You mean he will destroy it when that destruction will be more effective?”

“Most likely. But the one thing I can say for sure is that Musashi has yet to fully become the symbol of the Far East. The Kantou forces have yet to accept them and Tohoku is the same. That’s why Matsunaga won’t make the move to destroy the Musashi yet.”

“And is that what you want, former boy?”

“I was merely giving my predictions.”

Innocentius smiled bitterly and snapped his fingers.

“Let’s change the subject. Galileo, have you confirmed the information you gave me earlier?”

“Testament.” Galileo’s plentiful beard shook as he nodded. “Hashiba’s flagship, Himeji Castle – Shirasagi, has entered stealth mode.”

“I see,” said Innocentius with a nod. “So will it be coming here before long? Well, we’re receiving information from the special official and the Liaison Committee’s foreign nation official. Anything within P.A. Oda is still uncertain, but this probably means Hashiba’s Nagahama fleet and Sunomata have begun to move under stealth.”

He clicked his tongue toward the floor and drank some water.

“P.A. Oda has surrounded any important locations in a stealth barrier and only authorized people are allowed in or out. And that includes several large areas of land. For example, most of Lake Biwa, which is also the Black Sea, is hidden behind a stealth barrier. They’re apparently using it as a dock for constructing *corazzata*, but we can’t be sure.”

“Does that bother you?”

“Of course it does.” Innocentius tapped on the *cornice firma* showing IZUMO. “IZUMO was originally controlled by the Amako clan. That clan was close to the emperor. In fact, the original spelling of Amako meant ‘heavenly child’, but they changed it once the emperor gave them control of Izumo.”

“But then Mouri invaded, correct?”

“Yes. When Mouri and Hexagone Française invaded, IZUMO chose freedom and thus chose to become a neutral city. That’s when they modified their entire landmass to float up into the air. They also have a connection with England which opposes Hexagone Française and that’s why they helped modify England. Once the Amako clan was gone, Mouri and Hexagone Française’s invasion picked up speed and they finished taking over about twenty years ago. But...”

But...

“Starting ten years ago, P.A. Oda’s Hashiba has supported the remnants of Amako.”

“That means P.A. Oda now has the IZUMO technology left with Amako, doesn’t it?”

“That would be old tech, so it’s useless now. But that’s the technology that forms the foundation of the modern stuff. Do you get what that means? If you suddenly gained a bunch of cutting-edge technology, you wouldn’t even be able to properly copy the parts. But what if you have the foundational technology and can further develop it while comparing it to the cutting-edge stuff?”

“Is that why you sometimes spend your time searching for attack spells in the library’s ancient documents?”

“The pope’s attack spells need to be flashy and powerful, but they also need a grand historical tradition behind them.” Innocentius took a breath. “Hashiba and P.A. Oda received foundational technology from IZUMO and the cutting-edge technology from Mikawa. And nowadays building castles is popular and they have plenty of material for building aerial warships. It makes me wonder what they’ve done with Azuchi Castle, Nobunaga’s giant fortress on the shore of Lake Biwa. The Lake Biwa area has been hidden by stealth for a few years now, so we don’t know what’s going on inside. I don’t like the fact that they could have already built it and sent it out with a stealth barrier of its own.”

He laughed quietly, closed the *cornice firma*, stood up, and lightly rotated his shoulders.

“But Musashi is in even more trouble since they aren’t prepared like we are.”

“Really?”

“Testament. After all, if M.H.R.R. really is making a move against us, it will reduce the burden of the Thirty Years’ War on Hexagone Française. That means Hexagone Française can fully focus on IZUMO tomorrow.”

The Papa-Schola laughed again.

“That nation will become the most powerful in Europe. They are not bound by a history of mercenaries and knights and they have begun to prepare a large-scale national army. ...What is Musashi to do with them as their opponent? Hm?”

Chapter 18: Those who Prefer the Shadows yet Stand in the Sun

CHAPTER 18

"Those who Prefer the Shadows yet Stand in the Sun"



I am hiding
I am definitely hiding
By which I mean, um, how should I put this?
Point Allocation (No Excuses)

I am hiding

I am definitely hiding

By which I mean, um, how should I put this?

Point Allocation (No Excuses)

Satomi Yoshiyasu was an early riser. Normally anyways.

She always woke at three in the morning, washed her face, ran a circuit of the academy, performed her sword training, bathed, woke the others, and then ate breakfast.

But today, her sleepiness completely got the better of her.

Her groggy mind saw a ceiling covered in decorative paper and the room was still filled with the dark of pre-dawn. However, she heard a chicken crying somewhere and the sound of something moving.

...Where am I?

Her body was sinking into a futon and pillow. The blanket that covered up to her cheeks was a kind not found in Satomi. Her blank mind called back her memories to help grasp the situation.

The night before, she had made the mistake of starting to drink again and falling for Ujinao's cheap provocation. She had not passed out, but Yoshiyori had discussed the situation with a naked boy and they had decided to take care of her on the Musashi for a bit. That meant she was now a guest.

...A guest, hm? Then I guess I can go back to sleep.

“Wait! No, I can't!”

As soon as she sprang up, a giant mummy crashed through the ceiling with its limbs splayed out. That sound of destruction was followed by the door opening and Musashi's chancellor entering with a card in hand.

"Good morrrrrrning! To make your morning complete, here is your Pharaoh Wakeup Call!"

After the dusty body-press hit her, Yoshiyasu let out a scream.

"I think I just heard a scream from the diplomatic district toward the bow."

While running across the ships in a blue track suit for her morning training, Adele looked toward Tama's bow below the dimly-lit sky. Mitotsudaira glared in the same direction while running alongside her in a light blue track suit.

"This must be what the chancellor promised last night. Satomi's student council president was drunk, so he asked her if he should wake her up in the morning. She said that would not be necessary because she would wake up by three, but it's four now. He's likely made his attack after an hour of preparation."

"Satomi's president doesn't understand what it means to make a promise with one of our classmates, does she?"

The two of them repeated "judge" a few times and began to run on, but they suddenly looked up into the sky at the exact same moment.

They looked to the formations of ships in every direction.

"There's even more than last night."

"They seem to be rotating out. From what I've heard, Hexagone Française's main fleet is preparing to land at the land port to the west. Their flagship Pension Versailles is with them, so this is probably going to get exciting."

"What a pain," complained Mitotsudaira.

“Huh?”

Adele stopped running and Mitotsudaira tilted her head while doing the same.

“What is it? Isn’t it still too early for the dogs to wake up and join you?”

“No, look over there. It’s Asama-san and the sixth and first special duty officers.”

Adele pointed toward the terrace on the outer edge of the ship.

“Wasn’t that terrace being repaired after it was destroyed in the armada battle?”
muttered Mitotsudaira.

Asama, Naomasa, and Tenzou were hiding behind a food stand that had yet to open.

The three of them were looking toward the terrace where two other people were visible.

“That’s Noriki-san and...Odawara Chancellor Houjou Ujinao-san, right?”

“Tomo?”

“Waaaaaaaah!?”

Asama gave a shrill cry at the sudden voice from behind, but once she turned around and checked who it was...

“O-oh, it’s Mito and Adele.”

“What are you three doing?”

Hearing that, Asama placed her index finger in front of her nose.

...How can I explain this?

“We aren’t peeping.”

“Wasn’t that a little quick to jump to self-preservation?”

“Well, um, I was purifying some distortions here and there before we left and getting some help from Masa. But then...are you listening? You won’t believe what happened next, Mito, Adele.”

“Why are you building this up like on an early morning divine TV show? Anyway, while you were purifying things, you happened across a secret meeting between Noriki-san and Houjou-san? And then you called the first special duty officer who can read lips?”

They caught on quickly, so she gave a serious nod. The two girls gave small noises of interest and joined the line. She thought it was a little worrying how they did not even hesitate to step into the hiding spot.

But just as the word “solidarity” entered Asama’s mind, another voice reached her from behind.

“Hey, what are you all doing over there?”

“Huh? Masazumi, what are you doing? And in a track suit no less.”

“Well, as you know, I tend to collapse and I felt I was a little weak, so I thought I would train some.”

...Won’t you just end up collapsing while training?

But she had Tsukinowa with her, so Asama would receive word if something happened. Meanwhile, Masazumi approached while tilting her head.

“So what are you doing?”

“Well,” said Asama. “I’ll start by saying we aren’t peeping.”

“So that’s it,” said Masazumi after Asama explained. The girl then thought for a moment. “I don’t really get it, so what’s all this about?”

She hid along with them and then another voice reached them.

“Mh? What are all of you doing?”

“Eh? Oh, Futayo. We aren’t peeping.”

Asama explained again and...

“Oh, Lady Asama. ...Look at this Master Muneshige. This is what you call peeping.”

“I-I see. You sure are knowledgeable, Gin.”

“Actually, um, it isn’t peeping. It is a type of intelligence work.”

“Huh? Asama-chi, what’re you doing? Can we join?”

“You can’t tell Margot? They’ve picked up a porn doujinshi and they’re appraising it together.”

“No, um, that isn’t what we’re doing. We’re not peeping either.”

Just as Asama prepared to explain again...

“Hm, now this is a strange sight,” said Urquiaga. “Try explaining this one to me.”

“Well... Let me just say that we aren’t peeping.”

“Heh heh heh. Stealth shrine maiden, what are you doing hiding there? Let me join!”

“Well, we’re not exactly hiding... And we’re not peeping either.”

“Huh? I’ve been wandering around since I was locked out last night, but what are all of you doing?”

“Oh, I’m sorry to hear that, Azuma-kun. But just to be clear, we aren’t-...”

“P-pe...peeping?”

“N-no! We aren’t, Suzu-san! That’s a bad word, so don’t use it.”

“Hm? What is it, Asama-chi? Oh, c’mon, Shiro-kun. Quit practicing your rising sun prostration and look at this.”

“I see. Will this make us any money? Are you recording it?”

“Why does that sound a step away from being illegal?”

“Oh, Asama-sama. I am working right now, but are you perhaps busy peeping?”

“Peeping? Peeping?”

“Horizon, you and the brown algae creatures don’t need to learn that kind of bad word.”

“Um, Master Tenzou, what are you doing over here? Are you working?”

“Oh, yes, he is working. Definitely not peeping!”

“Huh? Asama-kun, why are you peeping over here? I’ll put this in a doujinshi if you keep it up.”

“Well, you see, Neshinbara-kun...”

“Ha ha ha! Look, Nenji-kun! This is the perfect spot to bask in the morning sun! And a lot of people beat us here!”

“Indeed. Are all of you here to view the sunrise as well?”

“No, we’re actually here for...”

“For curry, yes?”

“Little girls!?”

“N-no! That isn’t it!”

“... ”

“... ”

“C’mon, Asama! Why are you matching Pe-yan’s silence!? More importantly, let’s peep!”

“I give up. We can just call it peeping.”

Why is everyone here? she thought while lowering her shoulders in a sigh and facing forward.

There, Noriki and Houjou Ujinao had begun speaking, so she frantically spoke up.

“T-Tenzou-kun! Tenzou-kun! Go! Begin recording!”

“Aren’t you a little too into this, Asama-dono?”

With a silent sigh, Tenzou focused on the targets’ lips.

From what he had heard, Houjou Ujinao had an automaton body.

...But as a living type, she will speak the same as a human.

And so he began moving his own lips. He matched the movements of theirs and exhaled. That told him the vowel sounds they were speaking.

...From there, I have to predict what they’re saying.

In the early stages of training, he had copied the string of vowel sounds onto paper and used that to predict what was being said.

From there, he had gained enough of an understanding of conversational patterns to make the conversion in real time. He showed the fruits of all his practice here.

“Are you sure, Master Noriki? Sagami has also calmed down by now.”

Everyone let out sounds of surprise.

They are praising me. How wonderful, thought Tenzou just before Kimi added a quiet comment.

“Heh heh heh. To put it bluntly, that was downright criminal. And you misspoke at the end there.”

“Sis! Sis! He can’t help it! Stumbling over his words at the end is just what Tenzou does! It’s his way of showing his character! He found out how popular it was in England! When he introduces himself, I bet he’ll say Tenzou Crossuniche.”

...Wh-who decided on that!? And can’t you give me some better material than that!?

“Oh, my. That’s kind of cute,” added Mary next to him.

Almost Everyone: “Wow.”

These people, he thought while continuing with more of Ujinao’s words.

“It’s been thirteen years. Why not come back?”

He voiced Noriki’s reply.

“There is no point in returning now. The same goes for my family. I will continue on here. And another thing...”

Tenzou took a breath at the same time as Noriki.

“The two of us are different. And you were the one accepted as right.”

“I see,” said Adele with a nod and a hand on her chin. “This sounds serious. Not at all like us.”

“U-um, Adele? We’re always serious, too. Aren’t we?”

“Wait. Is it just me or does Ujinao not look very happy?” commented Naito.

“Y-you’re all ignoring me! You’re ignoring me, aren’t you!?”

Ujinao momentarily lowered her head, but soon raised it again. And...

“...”

“That was great, Crossunit-kun! You could do dubbing! Now let’s do some adlibbing! Try to make it like something from that transforming monotheism movie ‘The Transfather’!”

“This is gradually turning into a completely different event, isn’t it?” asked Naomasa.

However, Ujinao clasped her hands in front of her chest and she opened her mouth in order to plead to Noriki.

“Doooooooooon’t!”

“Th-that is not what she said, Toori-dono! Why are you butting in like that!? ...Ah! I missed it!”

“Doooooooooon’t miss iiiiiiiittttt! ...Wait. Stop. What are all of you doing!?”

They all did their part to force out a similar protesting scream of “don’t” behind them, but the talk was already over. Noriki turned his back without waving and Ujinao clenched her hands a bit.

“I will be waiting...”

Tenzou spoke the words, hesitated, and forgot to express the final “!”.

But Mary walked over from his right.

“Um, Master Tenzou.”

She whispered so only he could hear.

“If something has happened, I will help.”

She was saying she would help Noriki or Ujinao, not him.

...That's right.

He and Mary had needed some help to find their answer after one of them waited and the other left. So...

“ ... ”

Tenzou did not do too much to express the sigh given by the one remaining there.

That sigh had great meaning to the one who had made it and he felt it was wrong to let others feel that. Instead, he took a breath and spoke to the others.

“That is more or less how it went.”

Tenzou shrugged toward the others.

“For the moment, I see no other reason for concern. Of course, I assume none of you were aware Noriki-dono knew Ujinao-dono.”

No one asked about what had happened to someone before they arrived on the Musashi, so it was up to the person to decide whether to tell the others. That was an unwritten rule in life on the Musashi.

So to those who had been together since elementary school, their lives from then on were everything.

They did not worry about anything from before.

And so...

...Noriki-dono turned his back on her.

He had chosen his life here over his connection to Sagami where something had happened in the past.

Recently, he had found a nice balance between work and hanging out with his classmates and Tenzou assumed he intended to stay here at least until the Apocalypse was stopped or until they graduated.

Naruze must have realized what he was thinking because she spoke quietly.

“Well, it’s none of our business what anyone plans to do after graduation and it’s none of our business if something happens wherever they end up. But even so...” She smiled bitterly. “If we did happen to know, we might be able to find some free time post-graduation and do something about it.”

The slight tension he could sense in Mary vanished in relief and a sudden voice arrived from beyond the group.

“What are all of you doing?”

It was Satomi Yoshiyasu. She was hurriedly dressed in only her hard points, the cloth portion of her inner suit, and her tights. She wore her coat on her shoulders and she held a wooden sword in one hand.

“Sorry, but I was looking for your chancellor. I have some business with him.”

Yeah, that’s the normal response, thought Masazumi when she saw Yoshiyasu’s wooden sword.

But she could not exactly hand their idiot over to another nation’s student council president.

Novice: “Well, we already rolled him up in a mat and unrolling him would be a pain.”

Vice President: “He called it a sushi roll himself, but where did he get off to?”

Asama: “Oh, Persona-kun, that’s it right there. The thing you’re sitting on! Sorry, that’s my fault. I forgot to attach a note to tell you there’s something inside.”

At any rate, they knew where he was, so they all nonchalantly shifted position to hide the “sushi roll” from Yoshiyasu.

Vice President: “What do you think would happen if we handed him over to Satomi?”

Marube-ya: “Come to think of it, wasn’t it Lord Matsunaga we met yesterday that came up with the execution method of wrapping people in straw, setting them on fire, and watching them ‘dance’?”

Bell: “Oh, I...made a lot of people dance...in the game.”

Asama: “You have the highest score out of all the classes, don’t you? That’s great.”

...Is it really?

At any rate, it seemed Suzu was able to join in the divine chats by speaking aloud or having the sign frame read the characters she drew in empty air. That method was unavoidably slower, but Masazumi felt she made for a breath of fresh air among all the posts from the many horrible people in their class.

Anyway, she thought while facing Yoshiyasu.

“So what do you need with our idiot?”

“It’s only the morning and I already need to hit him.”

Silver Wolf: “I knew it.”

Smoking Girl: “But handing him over to another nation is a bad idea. After all, they don’t know how much of an idiot he truly is, so they might not punish him harshly enough.”

Scarred: “Yes, Musashi’s chancellor is quite strong.”

“Judge,” agreed Masazumi as she kicked the rolled up mat with her heel and sent it slamming into the snack shop’s wall.

“What’s that?” asked Yoshiyasu with a tilt of the head. “It looks like there’s someone inside.”

Crap. She saw it.

No, the long-lived have good ears, so it might have been the sound.

“You say some dangerous things, Satomi Student Council President. This...” She chose her words carefully. “This should not be treated as human.”

“That’s right,” said Mary with a nod and a perfectly serious expression. “That is the Wet Man, the great spirit that protects Musashi.”

“You aren’t exactly treating it like something so important.”

“It’s the same as pickling. If you squeeze it tight and leave it to sit for a long time, it gets better. Or at least your day will get better.”

10ZO: “Masazumi-dono, I don’t think that was entirely necessary.”

I have a hard time lying, she sighed to herself.

At any rate, Yoshiyasu lowered her shoulders while still tilting her head. She seemed to have given up on pursuing the idiot.

The morning chill had likely gotten to her. *Heading outside without wearing much must be a trait of god of war pilots,* thought Masazumi. But then Yoshiyasu suddenly spoke.

“Houjou’s demonic girl.”

She was looking toward Ujinao who had started to walk.

She was leaving.

The demonic girl with an automaton body started toward the diplomatic building she was staying in.

Suzu could hear her faint footsteps.

...She's feeling...sad.

She could tell Ujinao was standing tall and facing forward as she walked, but her pace was slow.

Suzu could tell something had made her feel down. She did not know why, but she knew what had caused it.

...It's because...Noriki-kun chose...to stay here.

She did not know the details, but it likely came down to the fact that he had not chosen her.

“Houjou’s in a difficult situation, too,” said the person from Satomi. “The attack on Odawara is coming soon, but their people are divided among a lot of different races and they have a hard time coming to a consensus on things. That demonic girl was given an automaton body partially because of her weak health, but I’ve also heard the previous generation forced it on her to eliminate the image of a weak or feminine ruler.”

She took a breath.

“If only they had a high-ranking retainer that was both reliable and human. ...But I suppose they’re as shorthanded as we are.”

Suzu tilted her head at that. She was a human and humans were everywhere.

“A human...is good?”

“What?” said the Satomi Student Council President in Suzu’s direction.

After a pause she hesitated with an “um”.

“Well, I don’t want any misunderstandings, but the majority race of the Far East is human. When negotiating with different nations and corporations or when acting as a spokesman to the people, a human provides the greatest sense of familiarity. The other races are better when you need to instill fear or reverence, though. ...Anyway, I kind of agree with it, but I have pride in my own race too.”

“Sounds...tough.”

“Eh? O-oh, well, I guess.”

Asama: “Suzu-san! Suzu-san! Keep drawing her attention like that! We’re rolling the rolled-up mat out of the way while pretending to clean the floor! Naito, give a nice shove with your broom or something!”

Gold Mar: “Oh, whoops. He’s on a slope. It did get him rolling, though.”

Smoking Girl: “Oh? The floor’s been taken out for repairs over there, so he just fell into the gator pond of the zoo down below.”

Suzu heard a few people cry out and run off, but she was still focused on Satomi’s student council president. From what she could tell, the girl was bothered by Houjou Ujinao’s attitude when she had left earlier.

The girl’s gaze was following Ujinao whose presence Suzu could no longer sense and the girl’s feet were moving in a hesitant way as if she was unsure where she should go.

She’s a nice person, decided Suzu before asking a question.

“Is Houjou...in trouble?”

“Testament.”

She sounded like she had only just remembered this, but her tone was firm.

“On the world side of things, Houjou is the Association of Indian States and India is Mlasi under the Mughal Dynasty. That gives them a connection to P.A. Oda which is a lot like setting everything up to invite in the very enemy that will

destroy Houjou in the attack on Odawara. But the representatives of the different races can't seem to fall into step due to their own interests and self-preservation," explained Satomi's student council president. "Nineteen or twenty years ago, the wife of the Houjou clan's leader became pregnant and so did the wife of one of the few human retainers from a line stretching back to the Kamakura days. That was when the clan leader and the retainer made a certain decision: once the clan leader's child was born as Houjou Ujinao, the retainer's child would become his wife. That way Houjou could hand out the inherited name of the princess that would eventually marry into the clan from Matsudaira."

"What...does that mean?"

Suzu sensed the others turning toward the two of them.

For that reason, Yoshiyasu crossed her arms and sighed.

"Well, if you did some research on Houjou, you would figure this out pretty quickly." Her tone was one that said she was not saying all that much. "Houjou is almost entirely non-human, but the clan leader would be taking a human wife and lowering the authority of the other races' representatives who were too busy fighting over their interests and self-preservation. And if Houjou gave out the inherited name of Matsudaira's princess, it would strengthen their Far Eastern side and lessen the Mlasi influence. You can also view it as Houjou trying to create a connection to Matsudaira. ...However, the retainers of other races claimed this was a contrived attempt to push them aside. Apparently, some even threatened to begin the attack on Odawara early. That was when a certain decision was made."

That being...

"To prove it was not intentional, they chose not to check the sex of the children before they were born."

"Wait," called out Masazumi who felt a throb in her chest at the word "sex".

"How much of this has been proven true?"

“From that, I take it you’ve heard the rumors.”

That was correct. The Testament Union issued almanacs on the student councils and chancellor’s officers of the different academies, but they did not give any of this behind-the-scenes information. However, there were informational books at the bookstores to supplement that.

She would sometimes check through them out of curiosity and she had seen some of this in there.

“Is it true?”

“I am only telling you things that you can find if you actually do some research.”

Yoshiyasu sighed before continuing.

“If the clan leader’s child was a boy and the retainer’s was a girl as hoped, there would be no objections to his plan. But if not, he promised to obey heaven’s will and leave Houjou as it was.”

Masazumi knew what had happened on the clan leader’s side of things at least.

“As you can see, his child, Ujinao, was a girl. She was weak and it was said she would have a short life even if she managed to reach adulthood. Having bet everything on her, the clan leader chose to leave Houjou with her. However, the retainers responded by forcing the human retainer away from Houjou.”

“And then Ujinao was given an automaton body?”

“With that most trusted retainer gone, a clan leader without defect was needed to satisfy the other retainers. I’ve heard that Ujinao officially inherited her name at around the age of ten. She was a weak child thought to have a short life, so the retainers assumed they could completely control her. However, it now seems they’re obeying her more than they ever did the previous clan leader.”

But...

“The retainer who left Houjou apparently abandoned his identity in a foreign land, increased his family...and committed suicide once Ujinao officially inherited her name.”

“ ... ”

“The retainer’s child was born a boy rather than a princess. He was unable to inherit the name of Tokuhime, daughter of Matsudaira Motonobu, but he kept a part of those circumstances in his name.”

“And that name is?”

“Well,” said Yoshiyasu. “He was the princess who lost a political conflict and left aboard the Musashi, so he could be called the ‘embarking departer’ or the ‘embarking princess’. And both of those can also be read as Noriki.”

After Yoshiyasu’s explanation, everyone excitedly formed a scrum and exchanged a nod.

“I have a feeling we shouldn’t have heard all that, but who would’ve thought Noriki-kun is in the same position as a character from one of Neshinbara-kun’s novels.”

“I know what you mean. That four-eyes author loves having characters that turn out to have royal blood, were hiding their identity, or are actually someone famous. I’d be a little disturbed if the entire class was like that, though. Oh, but I’m from a commoner family, so count me out.”

“I-I think female authors like you do that way more! Like having the guy a character met at a bar turn out to be part of a royal or noble family! That isn’t just a one-night adventure! Get some proof and then extort the guy for all he’s worth!”

“What? I don’t write anything like that. I do write one’s where the guy a character meets at a bar turns out to be a tentacle monster, though.”

“I sometimes lose track of what your shtick is, Ga-chan.”

“Anyway,” said Adele. “I think we’ve got more than enough inflation from nobles with Vicereine Horizon and the 5th special duty officer from Mito Matsudaira.”

“Hmm. Shiro-kun and I are pretty influential, so do we add to that inflation? Not to mention that Ohiroshiki-kun technically belongs to a noble family and Asama-chi is the heir to the Asama Shrine.”

“Heh heh heh. I feel like we’re all either influential or unemployed. But when you work toward inheriting a name, it’s easy to end up like that and we are the representative academy of an entire nation.”

Everyone glanced over at Satomi Yoshiyasu and looked up and down here.

“So that’s what a powerful person looks like.”

“Wh-what do you want?”

They turned back to each other and Adele nodded.

“I just learned that even powerful people can be flat. Lady Yoshitsune was the same, wasn’t she? Maybe that way even gives you a better chance at a future!”

“Judge,” replied Mitotsudaira. “During my fight in England, I found being flat gives you a better chance of survival!”

“Are you sure it isn’t that flat is only better for the long-lived?” asked Naomasa.

They all glanced at Yoshiyasu again.

“Really, what is it, all of you?”

They turned back to each other and Adele fell to her knees.

“I forgot about the difference in race. Is it all over for me?”

“S-someone bring a restorative for Adele! Make it something that will work right away!”

“That sounds like a job for curry pilaf.”

“Just use normal curry!!”

“Anyway,” said Tenzou while gently holding Mary in his left arm. “If something happens between Noriki-dono and Ujinao-dono, anyone with some free time can help out if they feel like it. ...We can do that much, right? We did learn of the situation, after all.”

Ohiroshiki nodded and raised his hand.

He and everyone else except Tenzou and Mary formed a scrum, crouched down, and exchanged a glance.

“What is this? When someone who has so clearly won in life says that, it feels like they’re looking down on me. Does that make me a close-minded person?”

“Well, the wave of Tenzou-kun’s life is still offshore. According to the Asama Shrine’s ‘Fortunes for Other People’, his fortune is ‘Smooth sailing, but in an unexpected way.’ ”

“Wh-what kind of exciting fortunes are those!? Ah! You’ve all bought them!”

Everyone stood up while telling Tenzou to calm down and Futayo placed her hands on Yoshiyasu’s shoulders.

“If something happens, just tell us. Everyone was flat at some point. No one is born with large breasts. ...Oh, I just said something insightful, didn’t I?”

“Can I accuse you of causing an international incident?” Yoshiyasu placed her hands on her hips. “And aren’t all of you being a little carefree? Hexagone Française and M.H.R.R. are attacking this afternoon, aren’t they?”

“In that case,” said Masazumi with a bitter smile. “Satomi Student Council President.”

“Just call me Yoshiyasu.”

A short distance away, Kimi said “So Yoshy then?” and Yoshiyasu quickly turned around.

“You! Stop that!”

“Yoshy it is.”

“Yeah, it’s definitely going to be Yoshy.”

“What else could it be?”

As everyone spoke back and forth, Gin turned toward Muneshige.

“It is fortunate they did not decide to call you Mune-Mune or Shigeo.”

“The chancellor sometimes calls me Shige-san or Muneo.”

“Those are pretty normal,” muttered the others and Masazumi cleared her throat.

“Anyway, Satomi Student Council President, you also seem fairly calm. After all, I don’t see you immediately preparing for your return to Satomi.”

“You could say the same about Houjou. Satomi has yet to make its decision and we intend to stay with the Musashi until it leaves port. We used trade as an excuse for our visit, but we aren’t exactly going to make much money here. We want to at least take back some information on the Musashi’s abilities.”

“That’s right,” said Heidi with a bitter smile. “You may be trading along the Silk Road, but you’re from Satomi’s Joseon Dynasty Korea. And Qing-Takeda will definitely overcharge you on the toll if you carry any goods back through there. But information won’t cost you extra.”

Just as everyone shrugged at Heidi’s explanation, someone suddenly appeared next to Yoshiyasu.

“...!?”

Futayo turned around at almost the exact same moment and someone else gave a vocal response. It was Neshinbara.

“Ah, that’s Murasamemaru! ...Can I take a picture!? Um, Lord Satomi Yoshiyori!”

Chapter 19: One who Traverses the Sky

CHAPTER 19

"One who Traverses the Sky"



What do you do
With someone who arrived from far away
And is leaving once more?

Point Allocation (See Them Off)

What do you do

With someone who arrived from far away

And is leaving once more?

Point Allocation (See Them Off)

“Honestly, resolve can be a troublesome thing, ‘Musashi’-san.”

Sakai spoke while resting his elbow on the railing covering the edge of Okutama’s bridge. He was not smiling and his eyebrows were more lowered than anything.

“Musashi” responded while preparing a side table behind him with her gravitational control.

“Then should you not take up that resolve in the first place, Sakai-sama? Over.”

“I’m not sure I would say that.”

Sakai turned to the sky filled with the surrounding fleets, held up the document in his hand, and let the light of the sky shine through.

“Being too choosy is a troublesome thing too, ‘Musashi’-san. You end up deciding for yourself what you should be doing.”

He looked to Tama and then into the distance.

“Satomi Yoshiyori-kun thinks he should be making more of an appearance.”

“Is that another issue of taste, Sakai-sama? Over.”

“Musashi” prepared the tea on the side table as she spoke.

“Yoshiyori-sama should be meeting up with the others about now. I am very interested to see how he handles the way our people act.” She took a breath. “But

if possible, I would like for everything to take a turn for the better. ...Now, Sakai-sama, this is a new tea we bought in IZUMO. Let us hope it has a good flavor. Over.”

In Tama’s diplomatic district, Satomi Yoshiyasu and the Musashi group stood near the port side of the ship.

She saw Yoshiyori move after suddenly appearing next to them.

He grabbed Murasamemaru and passed it to Musashi’s secretary.

“If you can use it for something, then feel free to take a look. I can’t draw it before handing it to you, of course.”

He was so carefree as he did so that Yoshiyasu could not help but speak up as Musashi’s secretary held it up in both hands.

“Wait! That is my sister’s-...!”

“It is mine now. The safety is active and he has shown all respect in how he took it. There is nothing wrong with this, Yoshiyasu.”

“Do not-...!”

She spoke the words that could lead to “speak my name so lightly” or “hand Murasamemaru over so lightly”, but she swallowed those words as she was in front of the Musashi group.

“What would you do if something happened!?”

She felt that was an acceptable question for the student council president to ask the chancellor, but Yoshiyori gave a troubled smile as he answered.

“You have that wooden sword, don’t you? If something happens, please take care of it.”

“But...I... This is more to make an attack than for self-defense.”

“She was serious,” muttered the people around her in shock. Musashi’s vice president’s comment of “Huh? But isn’t that normal?” seemed oddly out of sync with the others, but it was the most understandable. Meanwhile, Yoshiyasu lowered her head and wondered what to do.

She realized she could never stand up to Yoshiyori. That is, to this man or her sister.

But then...

“More importantly, hurry up and change. The divine protection of your hard points will have a temporary contract while you stay on the Musashi, but I doubt it takes the morning chill into account.”

His hand suddenly pushed on her back.

The sensation, weight, and hardness of his hand caught her by surprise.

“...!”

She brushed his hand away.

...Ah.

She lightly knocked his hand upwards and she could see a look of slight surprise on his face past that hand.

Oops, she thought. After all, she recognized the sensation of that push on her back.

...*That was when my sister was still alive.*

She recalled their walk home from the academy. When she had still been in middle school, her sister and this person had already joined the student council or chancellor's officers and they had been her pride.

“ ... ”

When she had walked between them but got so caught up in talking that she started falling behind, they had often pushed her onward like that.

Brushing his hand away now felt like rejecting those days as well.

And she saw his shoulders droop.

“Sorry.”

She did not want him to say that.

It gave her a reason to keep all her thoughts bottled up inside. But now that he had apologized, she could not say anything more.

“ ... ”

She decided to simply remain silent. Just as he had instructed her to. That was what she had to do now.

Once they met again after a short while, they could continue on like normal. However...

“Yoshiyasu-sama?”

A voice with not even a hint of sharpness spoke her name, took the hand she had used to knock his away, and held it.

It was an automaton who tightly held her wrist and prevented her from walking any further. The automaton's silver hair shook and turned an expressionless gaze her way.

“Musahi's Vicereine Horizon Ariadust?”

She understood there was anger in her voice and she understood she simply wanted to escape this current conversation, but that understanding only drove her voice louder.

“What do you want!?”

“Judge,” calmly replied Musashi’s princess. “I too think I would get a chill while dressed that lightly.”

“Oh? What is the matter, Yoshiyasu-sama? Why did you suddenly fall to your knees? Don’t tell me the cold has gotten to you.”

Asama: “Yeah... I’m not sure whether to say this was unexpected or exactly what I expected.”

Wise Sister: “Heh. Heh heh heh. That was well done even for my future little sister. Horizon, you go in for a slow-paced domination no matter who it is, don’t you!? I can always count on you!”

“At any rate,” said Horizon as voices came from the ditch.

“Dressed lightly? Chilly?”

She gave thumbs up to those voices and pulled Yoshiyasu to her feet. After that, she did not hesitate to turn her glaring eyes toward the girl.

“How about you apologize, Yoshiyasu-sama?”

“F-for what?”

“For rejecting the person who was concerned for your health. ...I am not saying you must thank him for that. If I did, it would mean you must thank me as well.”

“I-I don’t have to apologize for that.”

“Judge. I see.” Horizon nodded and turned toward Yoshiyori. “Then I shall apologize in your place. I am terribly sorry for-...”

Just as Horizon began to bow, Yoshiyasu let out a shout to stop her.

“Waaah! Wh-why are you doing that!?”

“It is a simple decision,” answered Horizon. “If you do not do what you should, you will be left with regret. That is all there is to it.”

Yoshiyasu listened to Musashi’s princess.

“Listen. If we assume that it is your policy to not apologize, then I will apologize here in your stead. Then, if you happen to regret this event, please let me know. I can tell you there is nothing to worry about.”

“Y-you don’t have to do that.”

“Then what will you do about it?”

Yoshiyasu glanced at Yoshiyori who stood past Horizon who was tilting her head and past the brown algae peeking out of the ditch.

He was looking away and his shoulders were shaking, so she felt the heat of a blush.

“Don’t laugh!!”

“See, Yoshiyasu-sama? You are already regretting this, aren’t you? I do not understand the details or subtleties as I do not have the emotion of embarrassment, but we can apologize together which is like a 50% reduction in the burden.”

Horizon started first and Yoshiyasu followed a beat later.

“I’m sorry,” said Yoshiyasu before raising her head.

She bit her lower lip and looked up at Yoshiyori. He returned her gaze, suppressed his laughter, and took a breath before speaking.

“That must have been difficult.”

“Why you...!”

Masazumi saw Horizon place her hand on Yoshiyasu’s raised shoulder.

“Ah?”

Having completed her duty, Yoshiyasu turned toward Horizon with plenty of hostility in her gaze.

...Wait a second.

Is this really okay? she wondered just before the expressionless automaton spoke calmly to the girl.

“You did well, Yoshiyasu-sama. That was a difficult mission, but humans can accomplish seemingly impossible things if they put their mind to it. Recently, a ninja with a speech impediment acquired a wife with breasts far beyond what he deserves and an idiot took my hand in an execution space and brought me home. Clearly, death flags are not at all that they are cracked up to be.”

“I don’t think you need to go that far.”

“And that is why I have determined that regret is easily created.”

“I don’t really get it,” said Yoshiyasu with a sigh.

However, it seemed her thoughts had cooled down, so Masazumi and the others lowered their shoulders in relief.

Masazumi then saw the girl fix the coat on her shoulders and speak to Yoshiyori.

“Why are you here?”

“I had an urgent matter to discuss with Ariadust’s Principal Sakai and the automaton with him mentioned that this...that Musashi’s chancellor and student council president was having fun with the others here. I decided to come greet him.”

“If you wish to greet someone, I can do so as the vice president. ...And it probably would have turned out that way regardless, so don’t worry about it.”

“Testament. I see. But I did want to discuss something with him.”

“Eh?”

Everyone’s faces twisted into frowns and Masazumi finally spoke up.

“U-um, did our idiot do something wrong?”

“Does that Pharaoh Wakeup Call not count?”

Masazumi and everyone else ignored her.

After Neshinbara returned Murasamemaru to him, Yoshiyori suddenly looked up into the sky and spoke.

“Well, how should I put it? I just wanted to thank him.”

Worshipper: “Is he using ‘thank’ as a euphemism here?”

Mal-Ga: “The only ones who can intervene in a duel between chancellors are Masazumi and Futayo, right? What should we do? Abandon him?”

Uqui: “Why did you only offer one option?”

Everyone crossed their arms in thought and Yoshiyori laughed.

“It’s just that he helped to save a part of me. The emotional part of me.”

“I see.”

Everyone nodded and Masazumi gave a sigh of relief.

“In that case, how about you visit him later? If we bind his hands and feet, he can’t do anything wrong.”

...Please reject the offer!!

Her silent pleading must have reached him because he shook his head.

Thank goodness! Oh, thank goodness! she thought while he spoke to her.

“I saw him last night and I’ve gotten an idea of what kind of person he is. ...But if I’m going to speak with someone, I like to have a thorough conversation,” he said. “Yes, if I’m going to speak with him, it would probably be after you safely arrive in Edo. Then you will need to speak with Satomi about quite a bit, including political issues.”

Everyone nodded in understanding, but one person tilted her head: Suzu.

“Sato...mi?”

“Um, what’s the matter, Suzu-san?”

“Oh...right.”

Suzu nodded, but seemed to have difficulty forming the words in her heart. But after taking a few breaths, she spoke to Yoshiyori.

“In...Edo?”

“Testament. How about we make a promise to that end? In fact, I would appreciate it if you promised that. We would like to have a connection with Matsudaira.”

As he spoke, Yoshiyasu took in a breath and began to walk.

“I’m going on ahead.”

With that, she stepped forward and Yoshiyori followed.

They almost looked like siblings walking together.

Asama: “Lady Yoshiyasu sure makes things difficult for herself, doesn’t she?”

Mal-Ga: “If only they got along a little better. Then I could make a doujinshi out of it.”

Almost Everyone: “Don’t look down on them like that!!”

However, the two of them eventually disappeared into the streets of the diplomatic city and the others turned to each other. Masazumi exchanged a glance with each of them while wondering what to make of all this.

“Anyway, we need to prepare to leave por-...”

Just as she said that, another voice reached them.

“Oh, why are you all standing around here? Lining up for my target practice?”

It was Yoshitsune.

Everyone looked into the sky off the edge of the ship.

A cloud floated just a bit above eye-level and that cloud was shaped like a ship measuring several hundred meters long. Straight swords pierced into it in places, large charms were attached here and there, and it appeared to have red thread wrapped and hardened around it. Several people and pieces of cargo were loaded on top of it and a tent was set up.

Naomasa let out a whistle as she looked across the cloud.

“Sage Cloud Ships with an Oat-spell cowlings are pretty rare. They must be in a rush to get back and the ship they came on wasn’t going to cut it.”

The cloud was floating by in the sky approximately 120 meters away and it had likely left the land port located near the Musashi.

The wind carried the Sage Cloud Ship beyond the torii-shaped gantry cranes that surrounded the Musashi.

Yoshitsune looked at the Musashi and gestured behind her for the Satou Brothers to move the ship in closer.

“Lady Yoshitsune, that violates the port control laws!”

“Pipe down. We’re leaving anyway. As long as we don’t hit them, it doesn’t matter. And even if we do, we can just run away. ...Now, then.”

With that, she faced those on the Musashi and jumped toward them.

Gin’s eyes opened wide at the sight before her.

...What?

Even after approaching, the Sage Cloud Ship was still about a hundred meters from the Musashi. Nevertheless, the short long-lived woman acted like she was hopping over a small stream.

“Hah.”

She rose up and the dim light of the morning sky washed over her back.

Once her leap reached its peak, she descended and finally...

“There.”

Yoshitsune nimbly landed in front of them.

It was a light landing. She did not have to eliminate her momentum, she did not pitch forward, and the deck could not be heard shaking beneath her. She then walked over.

“Hey, Masazumi.”

The rest of the group seemed a little disturbed.

“H-hey, Seijun. I think an athletic and eccentric person is calling for you.”

“Eh? Wh-what? All of a sudden...right in front of me?”

“Come here, Suzu-san. Something crazy just happened, but you don’t need to worry because Masazumi will do something about it. We can watch from over here, okay?”

“Hey, wait,” said Masazumi, but Gin and everyone else had already moved about three steps away.

And just as Yoshitsune arrived in front of her, two people stepped forward as if nodding. One was Honda Futayo. And the other...

...*Ah.*

It was Tachibana Muneshige.

The two of them kneeled before Yoshitsune.

“Please teach us the secret to that technique! Just telling us is enough!!”

Gin took a deep breath when she saw and heard what Muneshige did and said.

...*Honestly.*

Ever since arriving on the Musashi, he had considerately spent a lot of time with her, but even so, he had been giving everything he had to the training the ninja was giving him.

...*But he has not forgotten to look above and beyond what he is being given.*

What did it mean for that injured boy to ask for the same thing as Honda Futayo, who was fulfilling her role as vice-chancellor?

...It means he is thinking about more than just recovering.

He was not simply going to take back what he had once been. He would stand alongside the warriors who were continuing forward.

“He is trying to look beyond that,” she muttered while relaxing her shoulders.

...There is nothing to worry about.

She was confident he would accomplish this and she decided to support him as he did so.

Yoshitsune then faced the two who had stepped forward.

“That technique? You mean the Hassou Tobi?”

“Judge!”

“I see.”

Yoshitsune scratched at her head, repeated “I see” a few more times while nodding, and looked to her own feet.

...Is she going to explain it?

Gin lightly clenched her fists in expectation and watched Yoshitsune lift up her right foot and look at the sole of her shoe.

“How *do* I do that?”

Gin felt dizzy and almost collapsed.

“Ah, Gin! Gin! Are you okay!? Wait! Don’t bring out your Arcabuz Cruz!”

“Kh. ...H-how disgraceful of me. But I see this is the ‘nice cushion’ I have heard so much about.”

Masazumi did not need to turn around to understand the commotion behind her, so she looked to Yoshitsune's feet instead.

“Do you have something installed in your shoes for that?”

“No, I think it's a martial arts technique. You know the Battle of Dan-no-Ura, right? Those idiots in the Taira clan provoked me from a distant ship. They kept calling me stupid and flat chested. At the time, I was more forgiving, so I decided to let them off with nothing but a drawn sword up the ass.”

She lowered her hips to go through the motions of a jump.

“But how did I do it again?”

She straightened back up, crossed her arms, tilted her head, and frowned.

“Come to think of it, I'd never thought about why I can do that. Everyone always said ‘That's Lady Yoshitsune for you!’ or ‘It's just like the ↓↑ command!’, but I've never been asked how it works.”

She raised a hand to the two kneeling in front of her.

“If I have some time, I'll look into it. That's good enough, right?”

...Why do I get the feeling she won't be able to figure it out?

Masazumi suddenly realized she was looking at all this terribly objectively.

“Lady Yoshitsune, can these two leave if they are satisfied with that answer?”

“Yes, it takes guts to fearlessly ask the leader of Qing-Takeda for one of her techniques. Does this mean everyone in the Far East loves me?”

It was unclear how she had reached that conclusion, but it may not have been far from the truth. The corner of her mouth rose and she looked to Futayo and Muneshige who were still kneeling.

“I doubt it’s something I can do because I’m long-lived or because I’m me. If so, either all the long-lived would be doing it or everything I did would be like that. Also, I don’t think it’s a spell.”

“Really?”

The slight surprise in Muneshige’s voice seemed to please Yoshitsune.

“I find that spell stuff to be a pain.” She nodded. “But the long-lived are a type of non-human and thus have a close connection to ether, so I’m probably instinctually using ether on a lower level.”

“In that case,” muttered Futayo. “You are probably strengthening your body in a small way or stabilizing the environment around you. It would be much like the divine protection provided by our hard point parts.”

“You like making things complicated, don’t you? Then again, it’s possible what I do ‘instinctually’ is on a higher level due to my age or race. I have lived about thirty times longer than any of you.”

“Eh?” said Ohiroshiki behind them. “You false little girl! Y-you dare defile my life worshi-... Ah, what do you think you’re doing!? Stop! This is not the time for physical comedy! And stop marking my primary acupuncture points just to make a connection to Qing-Takeda!!”

“You lot sure are noisy.”

Masazumi nearly replied with “so are you”, but she held her tongue.

“Anyway,” said Yoshitsune while waving for the two kneeling students to move back. “Try to pull it off in your own way. Just don’t think you can reach my level.”

After that smiling instruction, the two of them said “judge” and stepped back.

“Now, Masazumi. We talked about a lot last night, but there’s one thing I forgot to ask.”

“Eh? What’s that?”

“Your surname. It would be rude not to know it.”

Asama: “I feel like that proves just how wild last night’s meeting was.”

Marube-ya: “I know what you mean. It was like a reactionary thing between people who barely knew each other. Kind of like the meeting version of tsujigiri.”

It had not been her fault, so Masazumi ignored what everyone was saying and looked Yoshitsune in the eye.

“Honda. My name is Honda Masazumi.”

“Honda?”

“It’s a common surname in Mikawa.”

“I see.” Yoshitsune gave a single nod that almost seemed meant to convince herself. “Since you told me that, you can ask me something. And I really will answer it.”

Flat Vassal: “Ask her if it saddens her that she’s stuck like that for her entire life.”

Smoking Girl: “Ask her why she’s so self-important.”

Asama: “Ask her how to live a life free of stress.”

Masazumi deleted all of the sign frames that Tsukinowa kept bringing up.

...A question, hm?

The previous night, she had heard a lot about politics and about Yoshitsune’s thoughts as a ruler.

In that case, something more realistic would be better. Something related to Musashi’s situation.

...And something she would know.

She could come up with a number of questions: What will P.A. Oda do now? Can the Musashi really safely arrive in Qing-Takeda? Why did Lord Matsunaga ask us to wait until 3:15? However, Yoshitsune would only be able to guess at those answers and she was unlikely to give the answer even if she did know it.

Just as she wondered what to choose, light suddenly reached her.

It was the morning sun.

Before a single thought could reach Masazumi's mind, light washed over the port side of the Musashi which lay north to south with its bow to the south. Looking east and therefore port from Tama, the second starboard ship, she could see Musashino being illuminated from behind.

“Ah...”

Looking in that direction reminded her of something.

“Lady Yoshitsune, there is something I want you to tell me, but it does not have to be now. Simply tell me whenever you figure something out or learn something new.”

“Hm? And what's that?”

Masazumi answered Yoshitsune who held a hand up toward the morning sun.

“It's related to the Apocalypse I mentioned yesterday.”

It was...

“The Princess Disappearances. If you learn or figure out anything related to that, please tell me.”

Masazumi saw a change in Yoshitsune's expression when she heard the question.

Her eyebrows rose, but she gave a snorting laugh.

“Hah. That's quite a strange question.”

“Do you know what it is?”

Masazumi tried asking, but Yoshitsune shook her head.

“No. Like I told you last night, I don't know anything about the Apocalypse. So if I do know anything, it's nothing more than you know. About thirty years ago, a group led by a so-called Princess began making people disappear. As far as I know, they grew more active about ten years ago and whenever it happens...”

Yes.

“They leave behind an incomplete erotic symbol.”

“What idiot told her that!? The Satou Brothers!?”

Masazumi shouted toward the Sage Cloud Ship that had begun to move away and the Satou Brothers began pointing at and hitting each other. Meanwhile, Kimi stopped covering her ears and waved a finger.

“Heh heh heh. S-see, it's just like I said! That erotic symbol is known the world over! The world over! It looks like the P-P-P-Princess Disappearances aren't a horror story at all! Unpopular boys and girls who worship the god of erotic encouragement are abducting secret perverts like Asama to gather them all together!”

“I-I am not a secret pervert! And stop pointing at all the unpopular people like that! Sometimes the truth can hurt people, you know? ...Ah! Where are you running off to, Sanyou-sensei!?”

“Um, Yoshitsune, you can ignore all that. It's nothing but human-shaped background noise.”

“I’m not quite sure how to put it, but you’ve got a self-sufficient system set up there, don’t you? But anyway,” said Yoshitsune. “I’ve looked into it out of curiosity. After all, the word used for Princess is of Chinese origin. I reached out to Houjou, Satomi, and Sviet Rus, but I couldn’t find any of the details.”

Masazumi was about to voice her understanding, but she stopped when Yoshitsune continued.

“But there’s one direction I did not check in.”

Sviet Rus was to the north, Satomi to the east, and Houjou to the south.

However, she had said nothing about the west. And the nation to Qing-Takeda’s west was...

“How did your investigation to the west...to P.A. Oda turn out?”

“Well,” said Yoshitsune in a light tone that said she had nothing to hide. “P.A. Oda has completely sealed off its central cities and regions. They’re using ley line reactors to put up stealth and defensive barriers, so no one can get in easily.”

“I take it you did manage to get people in.”

“But they never came back. They met a similar fate to the spies the nations once sent to Mikawa. They were all later found turned into otaku in Nipponbashi or Akihabara.”

Masazumi heard a few weak comments of “that sounds tough” from behind her.

However, Yoshitsune crossed her arms, gave a deep nod, and suddenly used her chin to point to the north.

“In England the other day, that Maeda boy drew that incomplete erotic symbol when he left, right? That confirmed a few rumors about the Princess Disappearances.” She widened her mouth in a smile. “I’ve been casually looking into a lot of this, so I know a few things.”

“Such as?”

As soon as Masazumi asked that, Yoshitsune opened her mouth and sang a song.

“Let me pass, let me pass

“If I follow this narrow path, where will it take me?

“This narrow path leads to the gods in heaven

“Your opinion is not needed. You cannot pass through here

“I have come to celebrate the eight souls

“By dedicating these two powers

“Going may be easy, but returning is frightening

“Can I pass despite my fear?”

It was the Song of Passage, but Masazumi felt her back stiffen and she asked about it.

“Why did you sing that song?”

“Long ago, there was an incident that happened in real time. Yes, a very long time ago, a great number of people were taken away and a song much like this one guided them.”

Before Masazumi could ask what that was, Naito gave the answer.

“That’s a story from M.H.R.R., isn’t it? Probably, anyways.”

“Yes. Well done, German descended angel. I refer to the Pied Piper of Hamelin.”

Yoshitsune opened her mouth in a crescent moon shape and produced sound through it.

“In 1284, a piper in M.H.R.R. caused a great number of children to go missing. It occurred several times in many places over several hundred years, but there is almost no documentation of it and the oral stories are very inconsistent. To kill a bit of time, I looked into it whatever information I could find, including hearsay, but I found myself with countless different theories.”

“That’s right,” agreed Neshinbara who opened quite a few sign frames as everyone focused on him. “I looked into it a while back to see if I could use it in my writing, but there are all sorts of theories. Some say it was the work of slavers and some say it’s a story about a group leaving the city of Hamelin in search of freedom.”

“Yes. To put it another way, if you removed the symbol of the Piped Piper, it could be the result of war, plague, slavers, bandits who used to be mercenaries, or the people themselves escaping or relocating so their feudal lord couldn’t find them. ... There was once a time when it was pretty common for an entire town to just vanish.”

“But,” said Neshinbara. “Isn’t it a bit of a stretch to connect that to the Princess Disappearances? After all, they only began about thirty years ago, so they wouldn’t be connected to the Hamelin event from almost four hundred years a- ...”

“Are you just going to ignore how similar the events are, boy?” asked Yoshitsune. “And with Hamelin and the similar incidents, the children who began to be taken away but turned back all said the same thing.”

“And what was that?”

“Testament,” she replied. “They said a straight path continued through the fog and they turned back once they got scared. If the line down the middle of the incomplete erotic symbol is a path, then this is very interesting indeed.”

“ ... ”

Yoshitsune’s comment left everyone speechless, but she continued on.

“Of course, there are often hints of a ‘guide’ or a ‘path’ in other disappearances such as when someone is spirited away. But in that case...”

Masazumi realized what she was getting at.

“You mean the Princess Disappearances aren’t some paranormal phenomenon and someone is causing them?”

“Yes, but the guide and path don’t have to be human. It often involves an earth spirit or a half-Youkai ghost like a Funayurei.”

Everyone nodded in understanding and Asama did as well.

“The shrines are also studying it as a possible curse. It causes a large-scale disturbance in the ley lines, so it is possible a spirit or monster that lures people in has combined the foundation of its being with the ley lines.”

“That’s right,” agreed Yoshitsune.

Meanwhile, the Sage Cloud Ship continued to ascend into the southern sky without slowing. The Satou Brothers were grabbing at each other’s collars, but they suddenly cried out.

“Ah! Lady Yoshitsune! Hurry back onboard!!”

“Quiet! I’ll be right there.”

After that, she sighed and looked to the Sage Cloud Ship.

“Masazumi, do you know the Hamelin story?”

“In general.”

“Remember this: One took them away, one hundred and thirty were taken away, and two were left behind. At the time, that’s what everyone was whispering about the story. So what about now? Just how many people will be caught up in the Princess Disappearances?”

Masazumi was unable to say she did not know because Yoshitsune had already made her jump. And she gave a few words of parting.

“But other than that, look forward to what happens at 3:15.”

Masazumi looked up as Yoshitsune leaped into the sky and Futayo and Muneshige took a step forward.

The M.H.R.R. and Hexagone Française ships deployed there seemed to surround the heavens and the rising sun.

Yoshitsune leaped.

...Really, how do I jump like this?

“Well, I can leave that to those young ones.”

She kicked off one of the gantry cranes surrounding the Musashi to correct her direction. That would be enough to reach the Sage Cloud Ship that had gone on ahead. While flying southward, she looked toward the city of IZUMO to the west on her right.

“Matsunaga?”

She saw Matsunaga Danjou Hisahide. He had his attendants with him and he was bowing toward a farmhouse outside the city. An old woman stood up straight within the farmhouse’s fence.

...Is he visiting an acquaintance?

She saw two of his attendants placing something inside the fence. It was wrapped in paper and looked like a pillar, but it was apparently very heavy.

I wonder what it is, she thought. Well, it’s none of my concern.

She then realized she had been looking to the side for quite a while.

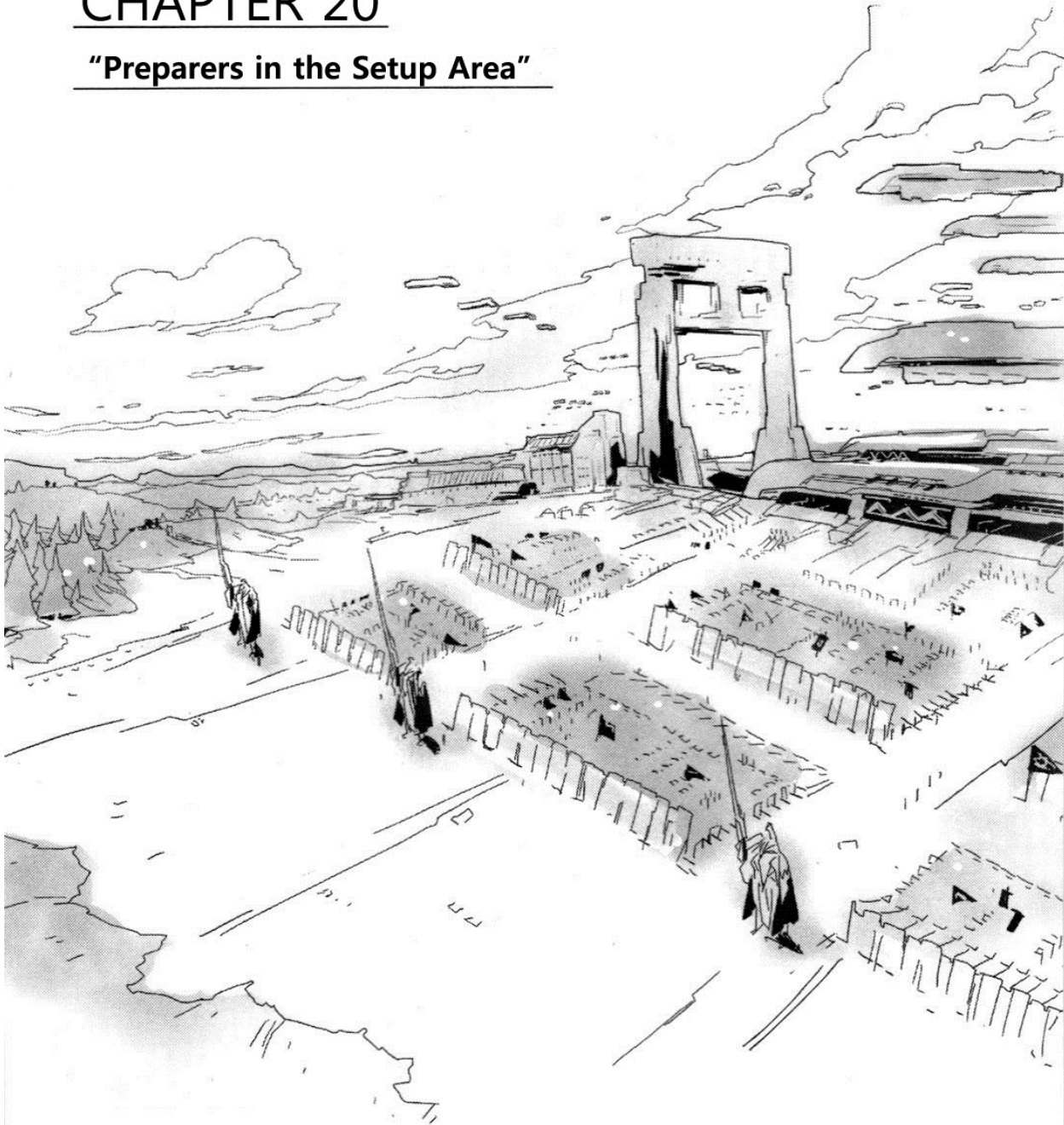
“Ah! Lady Yoshitsune!!”

Her knee landed a solid blow on the Satou Brothers who had moved to the edge of the ship to greet her.

Chapter 20: Preparers in the Setup Area

CHAPTER 20

"Preparers in the Setup Area"



After forming ranks
What should you do?
Point Allocation (Hard Work)

After forming ranks

What should you do?

Point Allocation (Hard Work)

ANA: “Hey.”

Dragon Dog: “Testament. It is beginning.”

ANA: “Did you pass my thanks on to my brother?”

Dragon Dog: “Testament. He said you were being too reserved and wishy-washy. And he claims he and water do not go well together.”

ANA: “And yet someone important to him has an origin related to water.”

Dragon Dog: “I have difficulty with unreasonable conversations.”

ANA: “Sorry. But even that...”

Dragon Dog: “Testament. I carry even that with me, milady.”

ANA: “Heh heh. You are perfect.”

The sky was clear and the midday sun was approaching its highest point.

Below, the Musashi and the fleets from Hexagone Française and M.H.R.R. surrounding it were filled with motion as they fulfilled their various duties.

The ships of the fleets moved and a many people and materials were quickly moving or moved along or within those ships.

However, the motion did not start with the Musashi or the surrounding fleets.

It began in IZUMO.

At 11:30 AM, a representative of IZUMO's central office and shrine made the following announcement to the Testament Union.

First...

“We will now state IZUMO's position and point of view.”

Everyone silently urged them to continue and the voice did so.

“First of all, IZUMO is neutral and will thus repair any and all aerial ships. That right was given to us by the emperor of the Far East. If the Testament Union nations insist on finding fault in that, we will retain our neutrality by refusing to cooperate with the Testament Union that takes issue with that neutrality.”

“They're holding the Testament Union in check,” commented Masazumi from the bridge in front of the academy.

Asama spoke up in agreement among those looking to the sky in the east and west.

“They can only make such a bold statement because IZUMO is a company that dates back to the Age of the Gods and because they control the Far Eastern divine network and the trade networks between nations that use that network. They also cooperate with Shirasago Enterprises and the Testament Union uses IZUMO's Far Eastern transportation network to trade between their own nations by interpreting it as a type of intermediate trade through the Far East.”

“In other words, the world wasn't fully connected in this age, but they're passing their goods through the Far East as ‘intermediate trade’. ...That would be why the other nations want the Musashi and its great transportation ability.”

“Heh heh heh. A decent woman has nothing to worry about as long as plenty of people are still trying to get their hands on her without harming her. Her patron is also aware of that, of course.”

But...

“This would have been a lot more dangerous if we weren’t in IZUMO.”

“Judge,” agreed the others just before another announcement came.

“Second, as a Far Eastern vessel, the transport ship Musashi is a neutral entity and IZUMO has no obligation to force it to leave at 3:00 PM as the Testament Union claims. However, the Musashi has announced its intention to leave at 3:15 PM and IZUMO will support that intention.”

“Vice president, you were the one that decided on 3:15, right? Are you sure that’s a good idea? What if they fire on us? We’ll be a giant sitting duck for the fifteen minutes before we leave.”

“I discussed that with IZUMO this morning,” replied Masazumi as a large sign frame appeared in the sky above the bridge.

Not even a hint of noise could be seen in the footage that displayed a giant shrine and the sky. An elderly man in white Far Eastern garb stood in the center.

He had a large build and his hair was roughly parted on one side.

“I am IZUMO Executive Chairman Izumo Yuu. Musashi Vice President-kun, you can call me Yuu-chan.”

“Judge. Anyway, Executive Chairman.”

“I said Yuu-chan is fine.”

“IZUMO Executive Chairman.”

“You sure are hardheaded, Masa-chan. And after you sent me your first divine text earlier.”

The others began whispering behind Masazumi.

“Seijun’s not just hardheaded. She’s hardchested too.”

“Oh? You say that, but I seem to recall you watching her butt when she climbed the stairs earlier.”

“What are you talking about, Horizon!? The chest and the butt are two different things! They’re so different that one’s the standard for the front and the other for the back! Do you get it now? ...Ah, I’m sorry, so don’t reach into the space behind you. Stop, stop, stop.”

“Hey, Margot. Masazumi seems pretty popular with older men, but why is that? To give me doujinshi material?”

“That definitely isn’t the answer I would have given.”

“Um, can we try to stay positive here? For example, we can say Masazumi has gotten close to the leader of Izumo. ...I bet her father is happy about that.”

“Ah! N-Nobu-tan! Put away that blade! Put it away! We all agree with you that he’s being too familiar with her, but let’s use this Hexagone Française red wine ‘Some Red Came Out!’ to calm down and then work together to plan out our eventual revenge!”

“That’s right. Masazumi’s dad is on the provisional council, so I think he would be delighted by these results.”

“Come to think of it, I’ve probably done enough just by being so close to Asama, Mitotsudaira, Horizon, and Mary. As we were saying this morning, our class really has a lot of important people in it. No, not you, idiot. Sit down.”

Instead of the sign frame overhead, Masazumi faced the filming sign frame that Tsukinowa opened.

“IZUMO Executive Chairman, I assure you that the Musashi will leave at 3:15 PM. We would also like to proclaim our neutrality, but in the case of a

misunderstanding, we would like to avoid any damage and the effects of that damage. So...”

“Third,” said IZUMO’s representative to begin their next announcement. “If another nation damages the neutral ground of IZUMO or any related ships from the air – and this includes indirect damage – IZUMO will make an appeal to the Testament Union to label that nation as an enemy that violates neutrality.”

“Wait,” said Ohiroshiki. “Does this mean they can’t use indiscriminate aerial shellings or bombings that would create stray shots and accidental damage? Even if every shot is dead-on, they could ricochet off our gravity barriers and still hit IZUMO. Does this make the Musashi untouchable as long as it stays here?”

“Unfortunately, Hexagone Française has already finished their preparations and we have already promised to leave at 3:15 and made the appropriate arrangements.”

My father and the others on the council did well, thought Masazumi. But...

“But, vice president, they can still fire on us and bomb us once we leave IZUMO, right?”

“That is why we will endure Hexagone Française’s attacks and request a ceasefire while the Musashi enters the next sequence. Naomasa, Can you give a simple explanation of that?”

“What a pain,” said Naomasa.

Still, she opened a sign frame and displayed a diagram of the Musashi and the giant dock it was contained in.

“Listen,” she began while the Musashi in the diagram began to float. “At 3:15, the Musashi will escape this place. We will float up in the dock and open enough gravity barriers to surround the Musashi.”

Asama frowned at that.

“Um, Masa? Surrounding the Musashi in gravity barriers is crazy. Won’t it only last a few seconds?”

“It only has to last an instant, Asama-chi. After all...”

Naomasa pointed at the diagram of the Musashi and its hull expanded outwards.

“We’ll use the gravitational cruising system to escape. The gravity barriers are to make sure the shockwave and air pressure we create doesn’t destroy the dock.”

“Can we really do that?” asked Tenzou.

“It’ll eat up a ridiculous amount of fuel and it’ll definitely blow out some of the gravity accelerators since they won’t be able to fully deploy. And while it won’t tear us apart since all the holes in the armor have been filled, it will be rough on the surface of the ships. Still, it’s possible. Unlike in Mikawa, the dock is open on the front. We’ll be making a short jump that only lasts an instant and the recoil will be pretty bad once the acceleration stops.” Naomasa shrugged. “But we decided it’s better than a shell bombardment. The low-speed shell on our approach to England damaged us pretty bad, but everywhere that wasn’t damaged by the shell withstood the air explosion from Ex. Caliburn. After the short jump, we can continue our escape with inertia and reacceleration. As for our destination...”

“I have a candidate. Some parts of the journey won’t be easy, but as long as we make it from the Kii Peninsula and to Mikawa, Edo is right around the corner.”

“That’s right,” said Naomasa while taking a breath. “We’ll have to redo the repairs at the Kantou IZUMO dock in Edo. Then again, it’s because we know we can do that that we can use such a crazy method of escaping.”

Once she finished, Izumo Yuu smiled over the divine transmission.

“I’m glad you’re putting the Musashi to good use.”

“But,” said Mitotsudaira. “Isn’t there a hole in that plan? The Testament Union is insisting we leave by 3:00. If we do not leave until 3:15, what will the Testament

Union do in the intervening fifteen minutes? Our promise to leave was in exchange for no aerial bombardments, so what did we give in exchange for the extra fifteen minutes?”

“They’ve actually already given their answer concerning that,” said Masazumi.

Everyone exchanged a glance and Suzu tilted her head.

“The ships? Huh? They’re...moving.”

“Eh?”

Everyone looked into the air and the entire sky seemed to be moving.

Among the ships encircling IZUMO, a formation surrounding Matsunaga’s Shigisan left M.H.R.R.’s fleet and slowly moved south.

Similarly, some ships began to move at the leading edge of the Hexagone Française fleet.

“What’s going on? It looks to me like they’re descending to the western edge of IZUMO.”

“Judge,” muttered Naruze while glaring up into the sky. “What a coincidence, Adele. I see the same thing and I was up all night.”

“Heh heh heh. What is this, butt politician? Explain it so the rest of us can understand!”

“Well,” said Masazumi while crossing her arms. “Remember what they said in that announcement? They mentioned damage to the neutral ground of IZUMO or any related ships *from the air*.”

“Wait, um, Masazumi? Don’t tell me...”

“Judge.” She nodded and hesitated a moment. “I wanted to avoid an aerial bombardment or having enemy forces descending on us, so I made this deal with the approval of the engine division and the superior operations committee.”

In other words...

“Hexagone Française will be approaching for a land battle. And it will begin at 3:00 PM.”

Everyone’s faces stiffened and Masazumi nodded with an identical expression.

“We don’t have to worry about a one-sided attack from the sky, but that means we can’t complain about any other damage and IZUMO can’t either.”

To sum it up...

“For the fifteen minutes until the Musashi leaves port at 3:15, we have accepted any attack carried out from the surface of IZUMO.”

“W-wait. So Hexagone Française’s land unit will attack us!? They may be limited to the ground, but Hexagone Française’s Ecole de Paris has gods of war!”

“Judge.” Tenzou nodded and scratched his head in exasperation. “That is likely why Hexagone Française decided an aerial attack was unnecessary and agreed to our terms. Although they do seem to have other plans as well.”

As Tenzou spoke, the others saw several gods of war standing on the ships landing on the opposite end of IZUMO. Neshinbara gave a further comment while glaring at them.

“They’re planning to have the gods of war install large bridges for boarding the Musashi. Four of them, it looks like. And the land unit descending to IZUMO belongs to Louis XIV, a man whose name will go down in history. With only fifteen minutes and the restriction to land, they will send out a small number of highly-trained elites. If we’re unlucky, they’ll even send out Palais-Cardinal, their flagcraft piloted by Vice President Luynes. ... Well, it all makes me want to die, but it should be good material for an aspiring author. Now then,” he said. “It’s my job to find a way to stop all that. ...Just leave it to me.”

At 2:30 PM, Hexagone Française flagship Pension Versailles arrived at the land port on the tableland of southwestern IZUMO. There, it let out approximately two thousand men. The Musashi students soon commented on Hexagone Française's main force.

“The knights of their royal guard are using gods of war as ‘horses’, aren’t they? How is that interpretation fair?”

“They likely claim that it counts as a horse if knights ride them. ...And the Testament Union must go easy on the soon-to-be most powerful nation. They’re also being viewed as the front-line against P.A. Oda. But look. Even the gods of war are wearing red below their breastplates. I never thought Musashi would be facing them.”

“Yeah, you were originally from around here too, weren’t you? Try not to remember old times and cry, okay?”

“You’re the one that needs to worry about that.”

Despite their comments, they gasped a bit when eight gods of war dragged forward the mobile bridges like they were blunt weapons.

They could tell each god of war was surrounded by a 25-man platoon to operate the mobile suspension device for maintaining the god of war and to ensure coordination between gods of war.

The Musashi students then saw the formation spreading out behind the gods of war.

“Wait, wait. Those are the musketeers of the royal guard!”

After a few cries of dismay, a voice identified this enemy and they focused on the figures in red on the enemy’s front line.

“Those are the Hexagone Française automatons known as the Tree Musketeers!!”

“It seems we are quite well known for *Belle de Marionnettes*. Don’t you think, Armand?”

That comment came from a woman in a red women’s Hexagone Française uniform.

She was a *Belle de Marionnette* and she was almost a perfectly lifelike model, but the lines of her joints were those of a combat model. She commanded two hundred female *Belle de Marionnettes* armed with long guns.

A man similarly commanding two hundred dolls turned his gaze from the Musashi and toward her and her lightly crossed arms.

He too was a *Belle de Marionnette*.

He had a large build and he wore a red coat with the sleeves removed. The lines of his muscles were drawn in black on his exposed arms and he scratched at his head.

“I’m not too interested in that. ...In fact, can *Belle de Marionnettes* even be interested in the first place, Henri?”

“Armand, you have spent too much time living with humans. It is clouding your decisions.”

“You say that, but you’re far too attached to the princess. Distinguishing between individuals is one thing, but prioritizing one over another goes beyond my understanding. ...Don’t you think there’s something wrong with Henri, Isaac?”

He looked over his shoulder toward Isaac who resembled a *Lourd de Marionnette*.

Behind Armand, Henri, and their troops, Isaac had a few dozen female *Belle de Marionnettes* on top of him.

But while he resembled a *Lourd de Marionnette*, he was not one. His fifteen meter body wore a red coat, but unlike the *Lourd de Marionnettes* that took on human pilots, he was not entirely humanoid. His arms were long front to back like a runway, his body was flat, and even his legs had a thick design.

He slid down the flat collection of sensory devices that corresponded to his head.

“Agreed.”



Henri

Armand

Isaac

“What’s wrong with being a loyal subject?”

“You need to grow closer to humans as a whole, Henri. Then you’ll understand. Let’s say...” Armand scratched his head and looked into the sky behind him.

“About that close.”

He indicated a silver giant. The *Lourd de Marionnette* was on top of the Pension Versailles that was sending out four companies led by the Scots Guard who acted as the chancellor’s personal guards.

It was a silver feminine *Lourd de Marionnette* with giant wings on its back.

Drawn by Armand’s upturned gaze, Henri also looked up into the sky behind them.

“The *Lourd de Marionnette* piloted by a Far Eastern *Belle de Marionnette*...no, Lady Luynes now belongs to Hexagone Française. It’s a little confusing how it is still referred to as the Palais-Cardinal despite looking so different now.”

“Lady Luynes is from the generation before ours, but she was sent from the Mouri side by Anne of Austria, the previous provisional chancellor.”

The Palais-Cardinal was approaching them.

It gave them a small, direct nod, so Henri and Armand lowered their heads as well.

“Greetings.”

Isaac did so as well and Henri spoke while turning to Armand.

“You have only ever met Lady Luynes in her Mouse form, right?”

“You only met her for a quick greeting before the combination, right? After all, the entire reason we were quickly constructed was to fill the holes left by Lady Luynes and the others.”

“I have determined even a quick greeting was an honor.”

“Your refusal to hand that memory over to us is not very *Belle de Marionnette*-like.”

“The princess laughed and said it was very feminine of me, so that is how I will view it. But as for Lady Luynes...”

Henri faced forward before continuing.

“It is said a *Belle de Marionnette* cannot fully pilot a *Lourd de Marionnette* because a will is needed to control it, but she broke herself down to create controllers for each individual part to become a *Belle de Marionnette*-style *Lourd de Marionnette* like Isaac while still allowing someone else to combine with it.”

“Testament,” replied Armand. “Her soul, which acts as the core of her *Belle de Marionnette* being, could be safely transferred into the Palais-Cardinal because of how strongly she had set her desire to serve her master and because of the results her master achieved. ...It was all thanks to Lady Luynes’s loyalty and Lady Anne.”

“Testament. Because Lady Luynes had never used the Palais-Cardinal for anything but defense despite its great ability, I had honestly wondered if she was not loyal enough to fight.”

But...

“I have made a definite decision after hearing the strategy for today: she is loyal, through and through.”

Henri fully raised her right hand which signaled for the unit following them to line up behind and on either side of their musketeer units.

These were the human students of the chancellor’s personal guards.

The *Belle de Marionnettes* then began to move. Henri and Armand’s units split between front and back. The leading group was the main unit and the rear group would protect the students.

They created a formation in preparation for the coming battle and their movements created enough wind to disturb the grass of the tableland.

“Now then,” said Henri as she lowered her arm within the wind. “Our preparations are complete. Armand, what time is it?”

“Don’t turn off your clock function. You’re a *Belle de Marionnette*, aren’t you? Are you sure the princess isn’t influencing you?”

“Testament. I know, I know. It’s 2:52, isn’t it? That’s good enough, right?”

“You forgot to add ‘PM’.”

“Shut up,” replied Henri as she lightly raised both arms.

This was not a signal; it was her way of preparing to fight and she spoke as she did so.

“The chancellor and princess are watching from behind. We must not embarrass ourselves here. And so...”

She quickly lowered her arms and something appeared in the air as they tore through the wind.

Thick red blades appeared in the air above either side of her. They somewhat resembled machetes, but they were five meters long and there were four of them.

“At three, we will tear into the enemy, my unit.”

The time had passed 2:57 PM.

With only three minutes until 3:00, Musashi began by lowering all of the bridges between the Musashi and the land port.

Of the cargo transport bridges extending from the starboard side, all but one were purged and dropped from the dock side.

The sole remaining bridge reached the center of Tama and seven hundred Musashi students used it to arrive on IZUMO's ground.

Hexagone Française insisted that Musashi must leave by 3:00, so they could not accuse Musashi of anything until that time had passed.

“Hexagone Française's main force sent from IZUMO's western land port has to travel almost four kilometers east to reach us,” explained Neshinbara. “At a god of war's pace, that should take somewhere between 60 and 70 seconds on natural terrain. If it will fill up one of the fifteen minutes until 3:15, so there's no reason for us to speed up the collision. We need a way to withstand the great speed they will build up for that collision, but we can spend 1/15 of the time in safety. So next...”

A sound arrived over the heads of those deployed in front of the bridge.

It was Musashi Ariadust Academy's bell and it was informing them it was 3:00 and that something was coming.

“Shells!”

The field artillery of the Hexagone Française unit far to the west and the guns of the warships in the western land port began to fire on the Musashi.

As a great number of shells could be heard soaring through the sky, countless gravity barriers opened on the Musashi's starboard side.

Seeing that, Neshinbara shouted an order.

“Begin! Let's take this a minute at a time!!”

Study:

study

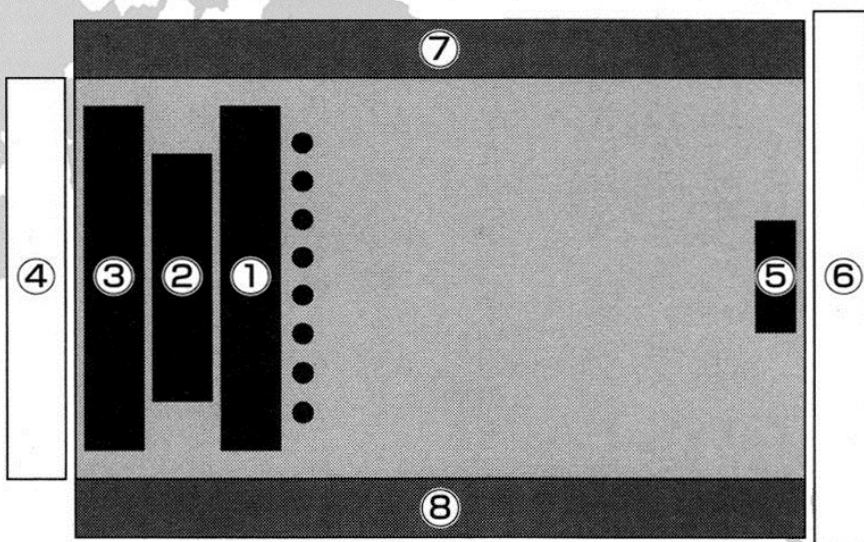
●The Battlefield as the Fight Begins●



"Sis! Sis! A battle's starting, but I don't get what's going on at all! Can you give me a quick explanation!?"



"Heh heh heh. Quick brother, it's more or less as you can see below."



※Distances and relative sizes are fairly arbitrary.

- ① Hexagone Française's eight gods of war and royal guards
- ② Three Musketeers' royal guards
- ③ Rear royal guards
- ④ Flagcraft Palais-Cardinal and Warship Pension Versailles
- ⑤ Adele and Musashi's defense unit
- ⑥ Tama
- ⑦ IZUMO's anti-wind woods
- ⑧ Southern shrine grove



"Ohhhh, I get it. But why are Adele and the others off the ship? Wouldn't they be safer inside?"



"Well, there are a number of ways to look at it. Barricading themselves inside a structure like the Musashi might seem safer, but that limits their counterattack to projectiles fired from above the wall, right? That's actually pretty dangerous. After all, putting up less of a counterattack would let the enemy prepare the bridges needed to board the ship. As long as they are prepared to withstand the smaller counterattack, they could easily board us."



"So they have to go outside and disturb the enemy movements?"



"That's right. We can't let the enemy make the preparations needed to board the Musashi, so we need a unit to disturb their movements and then escape back inside."



"Yeah, but I'm worried. Adele's in her mobile shell, so she can't use the Flat Chest Evasion."



"That's a unique skill, so she cannot use it regardless."

study

The Battlefield as the Fight Begins

Toori: Sis! Sis! A battle's starting, but I don't get what's going on at all! Can you give me a quick explanation!?

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8: Southern shrine grove

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Toori: So they have to go outside and disturb the enemy movements?

Kimi: That's right. We can't let the enemy make the preparations needed to board the Musashi, so we need a unit to disturb their movements and then escape back inside.

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Chapter 21: Sprinters in the Wasteland

CHAPTER 21

"Sprinters in the Wasteland"



Huh?
Why?
Why is that?

Point Allocation (Reality)

Huh?

Why?

Why is that?

Point Allocation (Reality)

The battle in southern IZUMO began with Hexagone Française.

Their entire force advanced on the Musashi with their eight *Lourd de Marionnettes* kicking up a cloud of dust in the lead.

They obeyed a single creed.

“Hurry!”

The Musashi would leave port at 3:15 PM, so the ground unit could only fight for fifteen minutes. However, their distance meant they would use up a whole minute of that time for the *Lourd de Marionnettes* to reach the ship. But...

“Fifteen minutes. If we follow our previous strategy and board them before then, we win!”

The blue *Lourd de Marionnettes* wore red coats while dragging bridge parts that resembled flat ships or sleds. They all had slender builds to reduce weight, but their thighs and upper arms had very human-like forms. A horse was embroidered on their chests and the speed of their giant bodies quickly covered a third of the distance to the Musashi.

They continued on.

They heard something tearing through the wind overhead as countless shells passed by them. After sensing them with his secondary sight devices, the *Lourd de Marionnette* on the far right sent a divine transmission to the others.

“Aren’t they firing a little late!? They aren’t too excited with the chancellor and the others nearby, are they!?”

“No! You’re too far forward!! The shells will get there first whether you rush this or not!”

A moment later, the shells hit in the sky ahead. At the end of their parabolic arc, they fell on the Musashi’s starboard side.

Meanwhile, the Musashi repeatedly opened torii-shaped gravity barriers diagonally in the air. An accurate stack of five barriers scattered sparks and deflected a shell.

“Shit! That isn’t fair!”

“Enough dirty language. That isn’t very Hexagone Française-like,” said a female unit member as she ran. “When forced to land and battle on the ground, even the Pension Versailles is going to be shorter than the Musashi. We have no choice but to fire on a gentle curve like that. If we don’t...”

She did not need to continue for everyone to understand. The Musashi looked like a giant wall in front of them and they could see the ship’s guns that had been installed on the side of the deck for the armada battle.

Those were dangerous weapons that could destroy even a *Lourd de Marionnette* with a direct hit.

“But cannons installed on the deck can’t aim downwards very well, so we can do whatever we want if we get close. Until then, we will receive overhead covering fire from behind.”

Even so, some small amount of shellfire reached them as they approached.

It tore into the ground and through the wind next to them.

Various sounds of impact reverberated from nearby, but none of them slowed down.

“Hurry! Their cannons are heavy, so they can’t alter their aim very quickly! If a shell hits nearby, move further forward! That’s enough to get in past its aim!”

They continued on.

It was safer to create a route the shells would not reach than to detect and evade them with their accelerated *Lourd de Marionnette* senses.

And so they all ran in gentle arcs to throw off the aim of the cannons.

“Hurry!”

They each ran in different arcs and the spray of landing shells pursued them from behind.

Just a little slower and the diagonal cannon fire would have torn into their bodies.

But they all continued on. They leaned forward, accelerated, and slipped below the shells that arrived just overhead.

“How much farther!”

“Seven seconds to the safe zone!”

“Answer with a distance!!”

“Five steps!!”

They advanced three steps and then four in an instant. Their sight devices saw the formation of students who had descended from the bridge up to the Musashi. Needless to say, they also saw their expressions.

Someone gave their impression of those students.

“They look nice.”

Someone nodded in agreement.

And they took the fifth step.

“!!”

In that instant, something happened quite suddenly. The transportation hatch on the Musashi's side opened.

The Musashi's transportation corridor looked like nothing more than a hole, but there was something inside.

“I thought they didn't have a cannon there.”

But this was something else and it fired something other than a shell: wooden stakes.

“Herrlich!!”

Something was fired through the four long blocks stretching from the Musashi's starboard side to port side.

“They're based on the ones Tres España fired at us but made a little lighter!”

Eight white wooden stakes measuring five meters long were fired.

They were flown with four brooms at the front and eight in the back. The various acceleration spells of the Technohexen in charge produced various Magie Figur.

“Go!!”

The giant stakes caused a great disturbance of wind in the long blocks that flipped up the Technohexen's hair and skirts.

This was a counterattack against the charging gods of war.

The Technohexen watched the fired stakes through the rapidly closing side hatch.

The attack was not all that fast. It was using brooms not encased in cowlings, so reaching upper-end subsonic speeds was a decent accomplishment.

“This is a guided counterattack! It has to hit!!”

Most of the Technohexen took defensive stances to celebrate the hit, but one of them seemed lost in thought.

“Ga-chan, what is it? If you’re worried, why not do the verwandlung? You can just summon the clothes.”

“Eh? Oh, that isn’t it. I just feel like I’ve seen this situation before.”

“Well, yeah. This is using the same method as the automatons in the first half of the armada battle. Y’know, when they sent the wooden stakes through the ship and...”

Naito trailed off but frantically spoke up a moment later.

“Ga-chan, you can’t possibly have seen this before! You can’t possibly know about this! When we were having fun with the armada battle, you were having a party in London!”

“Judge. That’s right, Margot, but I still remember seeing a situation like-...”

At that point, Naruze gave a sharp cry as if cutting off her own words.

“Not good! Those stakes aren’t going to work! The enemy can avoid them with that equipment!!”

“Eh?” said all the others.

Naruze looked outside the closing hatch with raised eyebrows.

The wooden stakes were already about to reach the gods of war. And as guided weapons, they accurately...

“I knew it!!”

The gods of war took action. Those machines that measured over ten meters tall began by throwing aside the bridges.

“This is why they wore those red armored coats, isn’t it!?”

All of the gods of war threw their armored coats into the air behind them.

Next, they sank down low while running.

“This is how Tenzou avoided those guided arrows in London!”

The guided projectiles targeted the movement and shape of the gods of war and the coats abandoned by the gods of war as they suddenly crouched down appeared to have a humanoid shape to them.

Thus, the long stakes pierced through the red coats spread out in the air instead of the gods of war themselves.

They had been successfully avoided.

Tenzou watched the gods of war from the port side of Tama’s deck.

“That’s the same evasion method I used in London!!”

“Oh?” asked Urquiaga while standing next to him with his large front wing arms crossed. “You know how that works, Tenzou?”

“Judge. I don’t just know how it works. When I was on my way to confess to Mary-dono, England’s warriors fired a bunch of arrows at me and I – fwoosh – evaded them. Just like this: fwoosh. I was only able to pull it off so suddenly because I was filled the power I gained from being on the way to confess to Mary-dono. You could call it the power of love.”

“Hey, everyone. I say our next formation should be this heretic ninja on his own. Any objections?”

“Th-that is not a formation! It’s a backwards way of ostracizing me!!”

“Calm down,” cut in Futayo. “We should not be fighting amongst ourselves. Crossunite-dono did nothing wrong.”

After nodding back at the ninja who was aggressively nodding at her, she held Tonbokiri in her arms as if embracing it.

“Listen. Just as we learn on the battlefield, so does the enemy. So fighting amongst ourselves in surprise is nothing but an expression of our own fear. If the enemy has learned how to avoid guided projectiles thanks to seeing Crossunite-dono’s technique, we must realize they are now more skilled than us and focus ourselves.

“And the reason the enemy has grown more skilled than us can be traced back to Crossunite-dono showing off that evasion technique in London, so if he had not-
...

She trailed off and paused.

“Oh?” She tilted her head toward Tenzou. “When you get down to it, this is your fault.”

“Y-you are the worst vice chancellor!!”

Me: “Yeah. If Tenzou hadn’t dodged those, we could’ve beat those gods of war.”

Wise Sister: “Heh heh heh. Foolish brother, don’t be like that. You need to let go of the past and look to the future. But listen, foolish brother. The ninja’s evasion does not apply to that.”

10ZO: “Nhh! It’s been a while since those siblings went for a combined attack!!”

Flat Vassal: “More importantly, the gods of war are here!!”

Adele, who had already descended to the surface, shouted from the sign frame.

Flat Vassal: “Get ready!”

The charging *Lourd de Marionnettes* had a single goal.

“The formation of Far Eastern students that descended from the Musashi!!”

Hexagone Française was interpreting this battle as an attack on a fortress. They were breaking into the city that was Musashi and the giant fortress that surrounded it.

And that had a single meaning.

“A city is conquered once people set foot inside and raise their flag!!”

“As the Royal Knights, we are to cut through the enemy formation, not to form a path!!”

Setting up a bridge, forming a path, and conquering were done by people. They had carried the bridges to lighten the load for the people charging on foot, not to use them themselves.

The knights had already passed below the enemy shellfire and into the safe zone, so only one thing remained.

“We will make this battlefield ours!”

The eight *Lourd de Marionnettes* drew shortened long guns and swords from their backs and raised cries to express the spirit of their charge.

“Vive le XIV!”

“Vive le XIV!”

The *Lourd de Marionnettes* accelerated toward the coming clash.

A seven hundred man formation of Musashi warriors was located three hundred meters in front of the central bridge on the starboard side of the Musashi.

They were not meant to fight gods of war. On the assumption that the gods of war were taken out by the shellfire and stakes, they were meant to hold off the Three Musketeers' automaton unit and the other warriors.

However, the gods of war were approaching fast.

“Hit them! That’s all you have to do!!”

Just as that hope and conclusion arrived far too close, a round mobile shell spoke from the front of the seven hundred Far Eastern warriors.

“Line up!!”

That shout produced motion.

Everyone lined up into seven columns of a hundred people each.

“Move!!”

As they did so, some were in sync with the others and some were not.

The seven columns moved to slip into the gaps between the eight gods of war. Some of them fell back, some advanced, and some stayed put.

Meanwhile, the gods of war saw their enemy opt not to defend and to instead slip between them and either approach or move away.

“...!?”

They had been prepared for a collision and their weapons were pointed forward, so they were slow to react to the side.

Having the enemy on either side also made them hesitate over which column they would attack and which their neighbor would attack, and the different movements of the different columns acted as a sort of feint. But after they instantly arrived halfway down the columns...

“Keep moving!” shouted the commander on the center left. “Don’t reflexively go on the defensive! This is a diversion!!”

If they kept moving, they would hit the enemy. Even catching them with their legs was enough. It was not at all what they had intended, but...

“That’s enough to crush them!”

The two on the far left and right reacted quickest because they were not located between two fellow gods of war.

They forced their lowered body inwards and slammed in their short swords as if trying to tear into the ground.

They swung down the swords, tore into the dirt, and a cascade of grass and everything else burst into the air.

But after the ground was torn up with a great sound of impact, something else was knocked flying.

“!?”

It was the two gods of war on the far left and right.

The two gods of war swept across, tore up, and rolled along the ground.

The two machines in blue armored clothing fell forward as if something had struck them from above. Their elbows stabbed into the ground and they tore up the dirt as they slid, but they began to twist after a certain distance.

“...!?”

They bounced up into the air, flipped upside down, and rotated a few times. By that time, the two gods of war that were now the farthest on either side reacted.

“What just happened?”

They then saw what had fallen from above and slammed the other two into the ground.

“Wooden stakes!?”

They mistakenly thought these were the ones they had just avoided, but they soon saw something standing in front of them.

This was an attack from the sky.

New stakes had fallen and stabbed into the ground, and these stakes were waist height.

They tried to evade the stakes that were sticking up from the ground.

“ ... ”

Just as they realized that would be impossible, they also realized what these falling stakes were.

“They’re using their *Lourd de Marionnette* ejection devices as pile drivers!!”

A moment later, they both heard and felt an impact.

Standing on Tama’s central deck, Neshinbara took a breath and looked to Tama and the back of Takao.

He could hear two sounds.

One was that of stakes being fired into the air and the other was of those stakes tearing into the ground after they fell.

He could feel the continuous sounds in his stomach, but it seemed somehow lacking.

“Those are the anchor piles used for large-scale construction within the Musashi. We fired seventy-two of them at close enough intervals for humans to pass through, but it should act as a decent barricade against gods of war.”

He could not see it from here, but the god of war ejection devices on the bottom of the ships were being used to their fullest. They repeatedly fired the stakes so they would form a rough wall along the starboard side.

But this was not meant to stop the gods of war themselves; it was meant to prevent them from carrying over the bridges.

“That is why the gods of war have no choice but to destroy the barricade that is three hundred meters from the Musashi. A public works job like that will be humiliating for knights, but, well, they’ll have to do their best.”

As Neshinbara had Michizane convert the statement to text, Yoshinao crossed his arms next to the boy.

“Neshinbara-kun, don’t tell me this is why you sent Adele-kun and the others down below.”

“Judge. Using them as a decoy was our second move. We first had the enemy lower their heads with the shelling and stakes and then we distracted them by sending the warriors between them. Only then did we begin the overhead pile driver attack. The fact that some of the gods of war were hit directly was no coincidence. That was thanks to Adele-kun and the other warriors.”

“Judge. I would like to call that a clever plan, but guiding the enemy with a decoy is a standard technique. Especially when it comes to gods of war. ...But that is for the best. Clever plans are not a recipe for a long life, so be careful.”

Wise Sister: “I wonder what kind of clever plan that king used to get his wife.”

Novice: “D-don’t say that kind of thing with the king right next to me! What if he saw!?”

Asama: “Wait. Neshinbara-kun, aren’t you using vocal input right now?”

Novice: “Oh, no! He’s looking right at me!! What do I do!?”

Four Eyes: “You always panic far too quickly. ...Oh, and can you send me an event application once you arrive in Edo?”

Novice: “Stop butting in when I’m so busy!”

Meanwhile, a new sign frame opened. It was a Catholic one using shared Shinto settings.

Flat Vassal: “The gods of war are leaving the injured ones behind and charging the barricade!!”

As the words were written, Neshinbara could hear the creaking of impacts from the starboard tableland.

The sounds of splitting metal meant a few of the stakes had already been destroyed.

“They got started quickly. They didn’t hesitate to charge in to open things up.”

“Are we in trouble? How many people are protecting the bridge from central Tama?”

“Balfette-kun is with four hundred members of the advance unit who are quick on their feet and we have three hundred here for interception and defense.”

“Is that why they are packed in around the end of the bridge? But it would seem they barely have any anti-god of war equipment.”

“Judge,” agreed Neshinbara. “Their job is to act as a final line of defense by preventing the enemy warriors from setting up ladders against the Musashi. As for an anti-god of war force...”

Yes.

“I already have something set up, so don’t worry.”

The Hexagone Française *Lourd de Marionnette* unit slammed their right shoulders into the barricade.

The metal stakes were fifty centimeters thick and eight meters long, but they used their speed to smash them.

Intense noises and scattering sparks filled the air.

Pieces of armor and the stakes joined them.

Their speed fell, but the *Lourd de Marionnettes* gave a powerful kick backwards.

“You can keep going, right!?”

They checked with their comrades and continued onward.

The four that had not been directly hit by the stakes crossed the half-broken barricade and faced the Musashi’s bridge three hundred meters ahead.

All of them lowered their hips a bit and leaned forward as they continued on.

They were preparing to dash.

Their target was the bridge up to the Musashi. If they could take control of that, they would not need to set up their own equipment for scaling the Musashi. The enemy had sent warriors out behind the *Lourd de Marionnette*, so the enemy could not drop the bridge because they needed to pick up those warriors.

Hexagone Française would win.

It was currently 3:04, so they had eleven minutes left.

“Don’t worry about the four hundred Musashi warriors behind us! And we can crush the three hundred up ahead!” shouted the commander. “So let’s finish this all at once!”

The commander received a *message de système* saying that those directly hit by the stakes were adjusting their senses. They would not be perfectly functional, but they would eventually be able to stand and rejoin the fight.

Therefore, the others moved as the vanguard.

They leaned forward and ran.

But at that moment, the central right one was suddenly knocked backwards.

One *Lourd de Marionnette* was destroyed and its armored outfit torn apart.

“What!?”

There had been an attack. It had been a long range attack, and yet...

“It was a slash!?”

Not quite. As the *Lourd de Marionnette* flew backwards and collapsed into the barricade, a certain shape had opened deep into its chest armor.

“A cut!!”

They then spotted someone racing in a tearing arc from the tableland by the ship’s bow.

“Musashi Vice Chancellor Honda Futayo!”

Futayo raised her speed as she ran. Her acceleration spell was Soaring Wings of Izumo-style Kazamatsuri. When used, it would sequentially eliminate every

unnecessary element, so it ultimately provided stable speed yet provided little instant speed.

...So I require a running start.

In her battles against Kimi and Muneshige, she had accomplished that by making attack runs. In her battle against Gin, she had used the cityscape destroyed by the girl's shells as a path for her running start.

Its top speed was among the highest of the Shinto speed manipulation spells and it could be altered into derivative spells. Kazuno had recommended it since it only eliminated what was unnecessary and could therefore be used at any time.

She felt bad to her god and Kazuno for having complaints with the spell, but that sort of spoiled desire was natural as a vital part of the fighting force.

Of course, there was one main reason she was having these thoughts.

...It's because I saw Lady Yoshitsune's Hassou Tobi this morning.

Yoshitsune was a hero of the Genpei War and any warrior would know her name.

...Just as the legends say, she uses truly ridiculous martial arts.

But she was a rare sight even in Qing-Takeda and Futayo was fairly certain her father had never met her.

If I had told him I had met her or spoken with her, how would he have reacted? Probably, 'Wh-where's her signature!? What, you didn't at least have her sign Tonbokiri!? Th-then I don't believe you actually met her. I don't!' It could be a problem how he would gradually grow more skeptical like that.

Tonbokiri would probably protest as well.

She nodded twice as she ran and then suddenly faced forward.

“Oh? When did these gods of war get so close?”

They collided.

Seven hundred meters west of the Musashi's starboard side, Adele turned toward the Musashi and saw Futayo collide with the enemy god of war unit.

The barricade between the Musashi and them was half destroyed, but that barricade had created a three hundred square meter space between them.

Inside that space, Futayo faced the remaining three gods of war.

...*Wow.*

Adele saw a new kind of fighting.

Futayo was moving so quickly she was almost entirely an afterimage and each step took her several meters. Adele's combat training had only taught her to protect a space of a few meters, but Futayo freely used the entire three hundred meter space.

She moved forwards, backwards, and around, but...

...*She's up against gods of war!*

As she occasionally fired her cutting power, the gods of war made dizzying movements of their own.

They were not holding back.

Their movements showed they understood their opponent was a vice chancellor who was the cornerstone of the fighting power that supported a nation. When Futayo prepared to use her cutting power, they would use their swords as shields and repeatedly sidestep. The three machines attacked and evaded like a storm and one of them would always circle behind Futayo.

But, said Adele in her heart. *The battle is reaching the end of the first stage.*

The time for the approach was over. The battlefield was entering the stage of attack and counterattack.

And currently, the enemy had three unharmed gods of war. Futayo may have been disturbing them with her speed and using Tonbokiri's cutting power, but she would have a much harder time once the other five recovered and reentered the fray.

Adele did not know if she could help or not, but she was on the battlefield too.

Neshinbara said he had something else prepared, but there was something she could do here.

Once they finished turning, the surrounding four hundred people were facing the Musashi.

And so she took in a deep breath and let out a shout.

“We will now turn and attack the enemy god of war unit from behind!!”

“Judge!!”

Adele looked to the four hundred others who moved forward with her. None of them had powerful spells or weapons and they had mostly been selected for the diversion unit because of their speed.

However, they had all fought in the armada battle and they had been stationed on Tama, so they had experience in defending against shellfire and delaying an enemy's advance.

...These are the ones most used to the battlefield!

Having their feet on the ground and knowing there was a set time limit improved their morale.

As she watched them open their acceleration spells, Adele voiced the word to begin the charge.

“Debut!”

That cry set them all in motion.

They all let out cries of their own, began to run, and continued to run.

...I need to hurry!

Inside her slow mobile shell, she could only watch the others leave. *How nice*, she cheerfully thought while watching their running backs. She personally liked to run and would even hold the anchor position in athletic festival relays.

...But this mobile shell takes all my leg strength to move at a normal human pace.

It had received light damage in England, but Naomasa had brought Mishina Hiro to take a look at it. The girl had said the following:

“Well, it probably just needs a few metal healing charms on the armor. It isn’t broken from anything but the passage of time, so we’ll put off full-blown maintenance until everyone else’s equipment is fixed. ...But most of this thing’s driving force is used for shock-absorption. Do you move the thing without any power assistance?”

Adele had not entirely understood, so she had tilted her head which had put a displeased look on the girl’s face.

At any rate, her father had left it for her and its selling point was how sturdy and safe it was.

She decided to continue on as the rear guard, but something suddenly appeared overhead from behind.

“You’re mine!!”

“Eh?”

She turned around and saw something drawn on the secondary display slate on the top of the cockpit area.

She saw the color red forming four giant floating swords and she recognized their shape.

...Those are the weapons of Henri, one of the automaton Three Musketeers!

Just as the thoughts “They’re here already?” and “That was fast” mixed together in her mind, the four thick swords shot down from almost exactly overhead.

“Owww!!”

The four sounds of impact overlapped into a single intense sound and everyone on the battlefield looked over for an instant.

They all saw a woman in a red coat attack Adele who was out ahead of the others. The automaton was Henri, one of the Three Musketeers. In front of her, Adele’s mobile shell was knocked a little into the air.

“Ow... What was that all of a sudden!? Ahhh, I’ve got more than just tears on my face. I’ve seriously had the snot surprised out of me!!”

After hearing that, everyone from Musashi looked away.

“...”

And they began carrying out their duty once more.

Henri used the word “anger” to describe the decision inside her artificial brain.

She had slammed her four prized swords into the opponent before her.

In Musashi's previous battles, that round mobile shell had endured all of the enemy's shells and other attacks.

It was an excellent target that moved slowly.

And so Henri had wanted to demonstrate Hexagone Française's strength by smashing it. However...

...It's this hard!?

Several torii-style sign frames appeared around the staggering mobile shell. Everyone was likely giving the pilot vassal instructions. Sensing danger, Henri used her high-speed senses as a *Belle de Marionnette* to read the reversed sign frames from the back.

And...

Asama: "A-are you okay, Adele!? They say a strong blow to the top of the head will make you go bald, but that's just a superstition, but there are curses like that, so do your best!!"

Gold Mar: "Is it just me or does Asama-chi make no sense at all sometimes."

Scarred: "Um, can she blow her nose inside the mobile shell?"

Henri truly could not understand what they were saying.

...Is this some kind of code!?

Henri used the word "shudder" to describe the decision inside her artificial brain.

"Ahhhh! I'm back! ...Okay, I-I'll do my best! Wait, w-what was that just now!? The display says it reached the second layer of armor! That was a close one!!"

Me: "If we call the ever-popular bikini armor a single layer, how many layers does your mobile shell have?"

"Um, twenty-seven, I think."

Wise Sister: “Heh heh heh. Who would have thought the perfect character for the final boss of strip mahjong or a strip quiz show was so nearby! Adele, tell that automaton that her quota is twenty-seven questions!”

...I have to repeat that same attack twenty-six times? No, this one reached the second layer, so would it only be thirteen times?

Still, that's thirteen more times, thought Henri while beginning to lose her confidence.

However, Armand soon arrived beside her. He too had arrived ahead of his unit.

“Henri, don't let the result get to you so much. After all, that mobile shell and vassal are both from Hexagone Française. Our academy can fortunately view that hardness as the pride of Hexagone Française and view your skill as praiseworthy. We can also say we have reached 1/27 of a resolution to the shield and spear paradox.”

“Hmph. Praiseworthy? I take it that assessment wasn't your doing.”

“Testament. I was told to tell you that. ...By the princess.” Armand went on to add, “It can be troublesome that *Belle de Marionnettes* can't lie.”

Henri lightly shook a hand.

“I will continue on ahead, so you take care of this vassal. You would be a better match.”

“Instead of saying I'm a better match, why not say I can handle her better?”

“The princess has always been the best at saying things backwards, hasn't she?”

With that, Henri used her shared memory to shout at the *Belle de Marionnettes* running up from behind.

“As planned, continue to the right and through the southern woods! Armand, you hurry too!”

Adele saw the female automaton named Henri and her unit sprint around to the left.

...What are they doing?

“Front line to HQ! The enemy musketeer unit is planning to charge the Musashi’s central bridge! They are going to fire on the warriors defending the end of the bridge while charging them from the side!!”

“Judge,” replied Neshinbara’s voice. “Gunfire is almost entirely useless against the gods of war, but our forces are primarily human. And an attack from the side is even more dangerous. Looking at it in a broad sense, this is a multi-stage operation on their part. The gods of war are keeping Vice Chancellor Honda-kun busy while the automatons begin their attack.”

Adele nodded.

The Musashi is in trouble, she thought. And so are the others running with me out here.

After all, while Henri and her unit rapidly circled south of the barricade, they began firing on Adele’s unit of warriors.

Automatons had accurate aim. The four hundred running warriors were forced to slow down and some of them had to take defensive positions.

This isn’t good! thought Adele as she saw it happening. *I need to protect them!*

She faced their backs and tried to pick up her speed, but a sudden figure appeared from the left.

...Eh?

It was one of the Three Musketeers. The large Musketeer named Armand ran up alongside her.

The tall automaton first slowly put on the wide-brimmed hat that had hung from his hip.

Below the feathered hat, he gave a thin smile.

“This is my job as Musketeer. Care to join me, outdated vassal?”

Eh? thought Adele just before she saw the ground appear directly in front of her.

“What?”

Adele saw Armand spread his hands to the side before grabbing and lifting empty air.

“I was made with a little extra in this area.”

The earth rose up and split open, but this was not just a few meters.

A thirty meter area of the crust split apart like a breaking wave.

Countless dull sounds resembling flesh being struck came from underground and small stones could be heard spilling out. The earth then split as if plants were budding within.

“Eh? Um? Wait!”

For dozens of meters, the crust shook and roared upwards.

It was three meters thick, it was at least twenty-five meters long, and it snaked back and forth.

“This is the frame supporting IZUMO’s land and the crust attached to it. But do not worry. IZUMO will not break just because a portion of the surface is torn up.”

Even a giant's club looked kind in comparison. The ridiculously huge metal frame and crust resembled both a giant hammer and a floating island.

Adele gasped as the naturally-made blunt weapon was held high.

“Um...uh...”

She somehow got the words out.

“I don't really want this.”

“Testament.” Armand nodded and then did so again. “The princess told me the Far Eastern rule is to always reject a gift the first time around.”

“N-no, I don't need that! I really, really don't need that! See, I turned it down three times!”

“I have determined you are three times as modest as the average person.”

He swung it down on her.

Study:

study

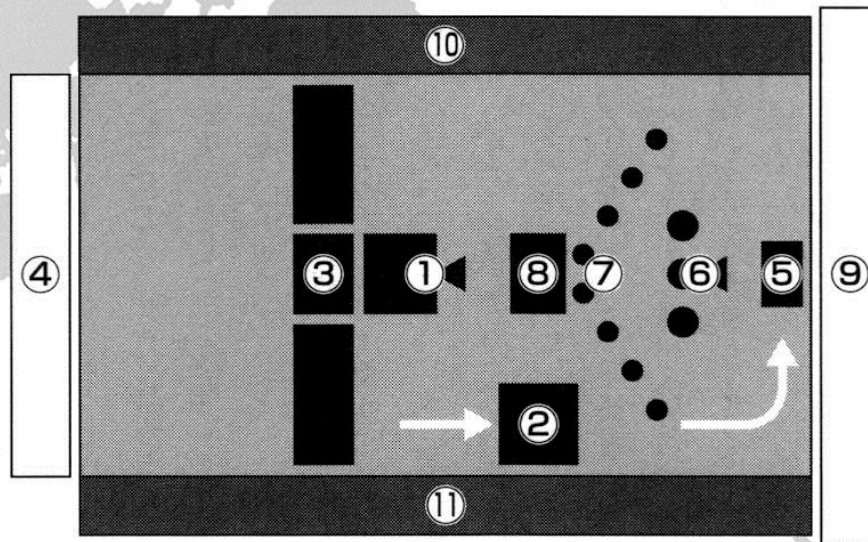
●The Battlefield as the Fight Progresses●



"Sis! Sis! A battle's going on and everything's a complete mess, so could you give me a simple explanation?"



"Heh heh heh. Messy brother, I'm not sure if this is simple, but here's the same kind of explanation as before."



※Distances and relative sizes are fairly arbitrary.

①Three Musketeer Armand's unit and Adele

②Three Musketeer Henri's unit

③Rear guard and Isaac's unit

④Flagcraft Palais-Cardinal and Warship Pension Versailles

⑤300-man god of war defense unit

⑥Hexagone Française gods of war and Futayo

⑦Barricade (half destroyed)

⑧400-man advance unit

⑨Tama

⑩IZUMO's anti-wind woods

⑪Southern shrine grove



"Oh, Adele's really given it her all. Does this pay as a part-time job or something? Should we tell Shiro?"



"Paying by the hour would be pretty wasteful, so maybe paying by the minute would be better. ...Anyway, the enemy has started circumventing the barricade, so we're beginning to wonder what we should do. Tama has to defend too, so everyone's really busy."



"Is there any time when people aren't busy on the Musashi?"

study

The Battlefield as the Fight Progresses

Toori: Sis! Sis! A battle's going on and everything's a complete mess, so could you give me a simple explanation?

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1: Three Musketeer Armand's unit and Adele

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5: 300-man god of war defense unit

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8: 400-man advance unit

9: Tama

10: IZUMO's anti-wind woods

11: Southern shrine grove

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Toori: Is there any time when people aren't busy on the Musashi?

Chapter 22: Those who Participate in the Great Activity

CHAPTER 22

"Those who Participate in the Great Activity"



What should be done
Before charging in?
Point Allocation (Criticism)

What should be done

Before charging in?

Point Allocation (Criticism)

“Adele!!”

While using her silver chains and armor panels to deflect shell fragments on the outer edge of Tama’s deck, Mitotsudaira saw the land of IZUMO jump.

The crust had shot into the air.

This was due to a giant hammer filled with gravitational control.

This attack by Armand of the Three Musketeers caused the ground to sink down before shooting back up from the recoil. The effects covered a radius of two hundred meters and all that land floated up like a hopping frog and then broke apart.

Adele had been in that area, but Mitotsudaira could not see her anymore.

After bouncing up into the air and crumbling, the ground fell and buried everything under what looked like a small mountain.

Amid the roar of the collapse, Mitotsudaira took a dazed breath.

...*Ah.*

Just as she wondered what had happened to Adele, a sign frame opened.

Sanyou: “Waaaaah! Balfette-san! Why did one of us have to be buried!?”

Wise Sister: “Heh heh heh. Sanyou-sensei, what do you mean by ‘one of us’? Height? Chest? Marriage?”

Sanyou: “Kh! G-glasses! I meant that we both wear glasses! ...And Adele-san was buried!”

Silver Wolf: “D-don’t worry! She’s fine!”

Mitotsudaira had spotted Adele.

Her trust that her classmate was safe and unburied had led her to the girl.

She was up above.

“She jumped!!”

As she looked up into the sky, she saw Adele’s mobile shell hovering at eye level with those standing on the Musashi.

This was the same leap using the shell’s survival lockdown system that she had used in London.

Mitotsudaira breathed a sigh of relief at the vassal’s mobile shell flying high through the sky.

...An excellent decision!

The girl had likely activated it the instant the earth swallowed her up. She was rotating a little and her flight was unstable, so she would fall over and slam into the ground when she landed.

But...

“She wasn’t buried! Someone support her when she lands!”

Mitotsudaira wished she could go help, but Neshinbara had decided this was her post.

...And because I'm slow enough that the Musashi might not be able to leave in time.

Those down below were primarily a diversionary force and Adele was a fast runner if she abandoned the mobile shell.

The same decision had been made about Shirojiro, Heidi, and the others and Naomasa had been left out of the fight because Jizuri Suzaku had yet to be repaired enough to actually fight. All of them were defending the ship just like her.

But Mitotsudaira thought while deflecting the shell fragments.

Even if she had not been so slow, she likely would not have been allowed down below.

...After all, I am a knight sent from Hexagone Française.

During their stay here, she had not descended to IZUMO even once.

And this was not new. She had done the same for the eight years since making a promise with her mother.

She compared the current situation to the reason and meaning of that promise.

“ ... ”

Her heart filled with thoughts she could not speak aloud. But...

“ ...? ”

Her lupine hearing picked up a certain noise and her nose picked up a certain scent.

...The smell of burning god of war oil!?

Mitotsudaira realized the loud roar she heard came from god of war movement and the smell of oil was that of god of war activation.

The four enemy gods of war that had been hit by the initial stakes were recovering.

...This isn't good!

She was filled with quite a few thoughts and doubts, but right now she had to defend the Musashi.

And to do that, she shouted out the fact she had just detected.

“Lookout to HQ! Hexagone Française’s god of war unit is recovering!”

But that was not all. The enemy had more than their gods of war now.

Henri and Armand’s musketeer units were circling around the south and north sides of the half-destroyed barricade. Letting them inside the barricade was dangerous. Futayo was currently battling the gods of war there, but the girl had her hands full with them and could not defend against the automatons as well.

The advance unit led by Adele was being slowed by the automatons’ gunfire and...

...The following automatons are attacking Adele’s unit!?

Mitotsudaira saw the enemy’s movements.

“I have a message from the starboard deck! The advance unit beyond the barricade is in danger! Isaac and his god of war automaton unit are beginning to fire!”

Heidi saw it while running around the deck and reinforcing different areas with money.

Isaac of the Three Musketeers carried automatons on his shoulders and arms while he stood in the central field that stretched from Tama's starboard side to the west side of IZUMO. However...

“Eh!?”

Isaac transformed.

The long arms providing footing for the automatons split apart and the lower part produced giant guns.

The end of the metal guns had a flower-like musket shape. But...

“Wait! Those things are clearly longer than a ship's guns!! They're not as long as the cannons on Tres España's San Martín, but still.”

The long barrels expanded in stages and they had already reached thirty meters which surpassed his arms or body.

He had one from each arm and the automatons on his shoulders and arms were already loading giant bullets and pouring in cartridges of spell gunpowder that were the size of a human being.

Heidi knew that both the caliber and the barrel length were used to measure the power of a cannon.

“...!?”

The roar of both arms being fired burst through the south end of IZUMO.

The shockwave of the blast blew away everything within two hundred meters of Isaac.

The spreading pressure sent a rippling wave along the land of IZUMO. At the center, Isaac created a barrier with his gravitational control to protect the *Belle de*

Marionnettes on his arms and shoulders and he braced himself and stabilized himself as the recoil pushed him upwards.

For just an instant, even the dust was cleared from his surroundings and he saw a truly clear space around him.

He could hear nothing and the afternoon sunlight was the only thing nearby.

...*Ah*.

In this perfect space with no waste, he felt he alone was impure.

He only had to fulfill his role as a weapon, but that brought so much unnecessary movement, shaking, and trembling.

I want to become pure function, he thought. *Is that not the ideal for a machine?*

He wanted to simply fire and nothing more.

If he continued firing, would he find the answer? Would he grasp some trick he had yet to learn and become a weapon of pure function?

He thought and rotated the external gyros on his right musket to stabilize the barrel.

“Hit confirmation desired.”

His high-speed vision observed his shells flying directly toward the Musashi.

Neshinbara made a single response as Isaac’s attack flew in lower and more powerfully than a ship’s shell. His voice carried over the divine transmission.

“Use the standard method to endure this, Mitotsudaira-kun!!”

“Judge,” replied Mitotsudaira, who had reported on Isaac’s attack, and the engine department’s work gods of war which were positioned behind her.

Mitotsudaira had soundproof torii-shaped emblems next to her ears and two work gods of war grabbed and threw something over her head.

“Musashi’s external armor!”

She sent two silver chains toward the five meter square panel of armor. On every side and behind her, “Musashi” and other automatons provided gravitational assistance while she grabbed the armor with the silver chains.

“There!!”

She swung the armor panel like a racket into the air off the Musashi’s starboard side.

That was the space “Tama”, captain of Tama, had predicted the shells would hit. A floating torii-shaped emblem marked the spot. “Musashi” and the others had opened a dozen or so torii-shaped barriers in front of that spot to slow the shells’ speed.

“...!”

They tore through those barriers like paper, but their speed did drop slightly and Mitotsudaira was able to act.

“Receiiiiive!!”

Just before the cut-like strike, she released the armor panel from the silver chains as if placing the panel in the air with its surface pointing upwards.

It finally collided with the two high-speed shells.

“Judge!”

As the shells burst and the sparks and explosion blew through the air, some people were watching it on divine television.

They wore vermilion uniforms and sat at a toshomen stand among a number of stands set up in a plaza. One of them, a man with transparent feet, raised his chopsticks toward the divine television.

“You idiots! You got my bunt backwards! Don’t do it upwards! If you’re gonna copy me, then do it right!”

“Taka, I think you’re getting too worked up. ...Oh, wow. The armor panel just hit the surface of the ship pretty hard. Well, I guess they decided that was better than a direct hit.”

“Don’t you two have practice?” asked Segundo from another stand.

Fusae waved a hand his way.

“What’s that, chancellor? Do you want to be alone with Ju that badly?”

“Um, Juana doesn’t know how to handle that kind of comment, Fusae.”

Juana was blushing a bit next to him, but she kept her eyebrows flat and spoke.

“If it is necessary, I do not mind. But...” She turned back to the battlefield displayed on the stand’s divine television. “Chancellor, what do you think of this footage sent by the PR Committee?”

In place of Segundo who simply crossed his arms, Flores Valdés turned toward her with bowl in hand.

“Is that even a question? This shows just how good Musashi is, right? They’re having a firefight with Gran Muñecas, after all.”

“Sister, you are very kind to go along with Lady Juana’s desperate attempt to change the subject. ...What is that sidelong look for, Lady Juana? Sister, do not say you only now realized what she was doing. You are only making her glare at me even more.”

“Well, I’m sure Ju can tell just how insufficient Musashi’s strength is in a lot of areas.”

“Really?” asked everyone.

“They seem to be putting a good enough fight to me,” said Flores.

“They are not.” Juana gave a small nod. “Looking at their individual strength, Musashi’s student council and chancellor’s officers are on the same level as any other nation. That was proven well enough in Mikawa, England, and with us during the armada battle. And when looking at the eight ships of the Musashi, their durability, size, and cruising ability make any military conflict meant to silence them a large obstacle indeed.”

But...

“Hexagone Française has used the late timing of their challenge to analyze those previous examples ahead of time. If destroying the Musashi would be too difficult, they simply must avoid including that as a condition for their victory. Also, they can avoid an attack from the Logismoï Oplo by keeping their flagship out of range. And if Musashi’s officers are highly skilled...”

She looked to the screen where Musashi’s vice chancellor was fighting Hexagone Française’s Gran Muñecas.

“Oh,” said someone as Musashi’s vice chancellor defeated one of them.

Musashi had scored a small victory.

However, everyone stared at Juana whose expression was not at all moved by the cheers reaching them via divine transmission.

She then nodded and turned toward Fusae.

“Do you understand, 2nd special duty officer?”

“Hmm, I was thinking about retiring soon, though”

Fusae turned toward them all and crossed her blurry feet on top of her chair.

“For about four minutes, Hexagone Française has been advancing their pieces while assuming they will have to make some sacrifices.”

Namely...

“First, they sent in their Gran Muñeca unit which prevented Musashi from settling this with duels. Look. Just look. It took quite a bit of time for Musashi’s vice chancellor to defeat just the one Gran Muñeca, right? But the pilot wasn’t their vice chancellor, was he?”

“Oh,” said Flores as she realized what Fusae was saying. “Hexagone Française’s vice chancellor hasn’t shown up yet. They’re an unknown newbie.”

“I thought we might get to see them here, but oh well. Anyway, Hexagone Française has managed to hold off Musashi’s vice chancellor for several minutes at the cost of a single Gran Muñeca. Meanwhile, their musketeer unit and main unit are completely untouched. To put it another way,” she said. “As long as Musashi can’t use their eight ships or bring in the rules of duels between representatives, they do not have the spare firepower needed to take on a large nation. I don’t know if proving that with the Gran Muñeca unit was meant as an insult against us, but it does mean they have a skilled tactician. I would guess this is the new vice chancellor they got the other day.”

“That’s right,” agreed Segundo while bringing the edge of his bowl to his mouth. “But Fusae-kun, you look like you have more to say.”

“Testament. I do.” Fusae lowered and relaxed her shoulders. “Musashi had this same insufficient strength when they fought us, didn’t they? England supplied them with weapons and helped them with navigation and manpower and they developed other methods on their own. In other words, they overcame their insufficiencies through negotiation and other artificial means.”

So...

“I kind of hope Hexagone Française meets the same fate we did.”

Adele was still shaken, but she faced and ran forward nonetheless.

After landing, she had fallen and rolled a dozen or so times, but her mobile shell was unharmed. She was fortunate she had not had anything to eat or drink since an early lunch.

She had been shaking around where she was fixed in place inside, but she had been trained to control a fallen or rolling mobile shell in her standard defensive training as a vassal. She still felt a squeezing in her stomach, but she did not vomit.

...I need to keep going.

One hundred meters ahead, she saw the backs of the others who had started toward the Musashi but found themselves cut off by the barricade and the god of war unit.

Hurry, she told herself. I need to hurry and protect the others. That's what a mobile shell is for.

The musketeer's swords had told her she could take an attack on the god of war level, so she worked to catch up with the others and...

...From the left!

The female Musketeer automaton named Henri was circling to the right with her unit.

A bit farther back, Armand's unit was circling to the left.

If she was to find a gap, the timing would work better on the left.

Hurry, she urged herself while gathering strength in her knees that threatened to give out.

The god of war automaton named Isaac had begun firing behind her. After avoiding the shockwave of those shots, the rear group of enemies began moving in from the left and right of Adele and her unit.

The enemy's movement was clear.

The gods of war had formed a wall to stop Adele's advance unit from returning to the Musashi.

Then, Henri and Armand's musketeer units would charge the Musashi's bridge from either side and the shockwaves of Isaac's shellfire would pursue them from behind.

...It won't be the automaton musketeer units that deal with us once we can't return to the Musashi. That will be done with a pincer attack from the pursuing Royal Guards who are primarily made up of students.

Instead of giving the victory to their powerful gods of war or automatons, they were giving themselves a victory in a match between humans. Even if they did not reach the Musashi, that would increase the impression that Hexagone Française had won.

Ever since the gods of war had circled behind the advance unit, it had looked like Futayo was holding them at bay, but the exact opposite was true. Whoever had come up with this strategy had likely given the following instructions: if you do not achieve anything in the initial charge, shift your focus to allowing our human forces to achieve as much as possible.

They had a skilled tactician. So...

"Hurry!"

Adele ran.

She was only one hundred meters from the broken barricade. Without her armored shell and with intact ground, she could have run that distance in no time.

...If only dad had made this thing move faster!

How strange it was to think that on the battlefield, how much it bothered her, and various other contradictory ideas pursued each other in her heart.

But...

“...”

She could see the others up ahead as they hesitated over whether to circle around or pass through the broken barricade. And they soon noticed her.

“Hey, everyone! Musashi’s flat but hard shield is here!!”

“Oh, is she going to take the hits for us, as strange as that is!?”

“Is that what she’s into? How praiseworthy!”

...When did I become that kind of character!?

At any rate, I need to hurry, she thought while urging herself ever onward.

Suddenly, another color appeared between her and the others.

It was blue, it was quite large, and Adele gave reflexive shout.

“Stand back! An Hexagone Française’s god of war has recovered!”

As soon as she said that, the god of war began to move.

Only one of the four had managed to recover, but it swung its short sword toward the Musashi warriors.

The giant sword struck quick with wind wrapping around it, but it was stopped in midair.

However, that slash had not been stopped by the single recovered Hexagone Française god of war itself.

Something had struck and stopped its wrist.

The tip of a scabbard jabbed sharply into the wrist joint that was linked by wire cylinders.

The long red scabbard was wielded by a blue god of war encased in Far Eastern armor. It held the hilt of the sword and the exterior of its head was made to resemble a dog.

“I am Satomi Academy Student Council President Satomi Yoshiyasu. If this battle continues, the damage could reach our trade ship, so I have been sent out in Righteousness to provide a warning.”

The blue dog god of war asked a question after naming itself.

“Assume that I will decide how to handle this based on your next actions.”

A single noise gave the sign to oppose Yoshiyasu’s words.

Isaac continued firing his muskets without pausing in the slightest.

The roar urged the battle to continue and so Hexagone Française’s *Lourd de Marionnette* pulled back the wrist hit by the scabbard.

“...!”

And it silently and swiftly tried to reverse its wrist for an attack of its own.

“!?”

But it could not reverse its wrist. Its sight devices worked to determine why and they saw a certain fact: the red scabbard was still pressed against its wrist.

...*What?*

The scabbard had not grown longer.

The Satomi *Lourd de Marionnette* was pressing the scabbard forward with its left hand and pulling the blade toward its own shoulder with its right hand.

The movements of its hands had simply pushed the scabbard away from the hilt.

The action required a perfect prediction of the path and speed of the Hexagone Française *Lourd de Marionnette*'s wrist. That was why it had not noticed anything wrong when pulling back its wrist and why its wrist was perfectly pinned.

Before the pilot could even guess what was to come, Yoshiyasu spoke.

“A regrettable answer.”

An instant jab stabbed halfway into the right side of its chest.

“Should I say she made it on time? No, that may have been a little late.”

Neshinbara muttered to himself on top of the bridge in front of the academy. Next to him, Kimi was holding her hair in place due to the rough wind caused by Isaac's shelling.

“Heh heh. You make it look like this was all according to plan, but should you really be using that Satomi girl? Prideful girls can really hold a grudge when they find you were simply using them.”

“Judge. It seems Lady Yoshitsune ordered this and Chancellor Yoshiyori wished for it as well. Satomi's diplomatic ship arrived at Musashi last night, but it's still moored on Tama. Sending them out due to side effects of the shelling and other attacks is really just an excuse, but in diplomacy, you can get by as long as you have some kind of reason. ... Vice President Honda-kun just had to send a suggestion.”

“Heh heh. I was more worried about whether you would follow-through with that flat Satomi girl.”

“What?” Neshinbara tilted his head. “Why me?”

“Heh. You fool. Flat long-lived are your jurisdiction, aren’t they?”

“Wh-what do you mean ‘Heh. You fool.’? That’s no way to talk about someone’s life! And don’t make things up!”

Asama: “Um, Neshinbara-kun. Just ignore her. With her, you lose if you even acknowledge her. She’s a crazy person, after all. A-and, Toori-kun’s been that way a lot lately too.”

Wise Sister: “Heh heh. What is Musashi’s giant breasts gunner talking about? And would that be Giant Bregun for short? Is that some kind of giant monster? Add in the shrine maiden part and it’s Giant Bregun Shriden. Is that a giant robot?”

Asama: “Nh! I-ignore her! I’m ignoring you!”

Smoking Girl: “This is hopeless.”

Meanwhile, the sounds on the battlefield changed.

Compared to before, the sounds of clashing and splitting metal grew much clearer.

This was the din of battling gods of war and Neshinbara muttered to himself as he listened to it.

“It is currently 3:07. That leaves eight minutes. The situation still has plenty of time to develop.

That was when he heard voices on both sides down below.

After circling to the south and north, Henri and Armand of the automaton Three Musketeers were beginning to charge the bridge leading to central Tama.

They’re here, thought Neshinbara with raised eyebrows.

He opened a few sign frame and spoke.

“Intercept them, everyone!”

Henri’s detour took her right alongside IZUMO’s southern forest.

Currently, three of Hexagone Française’s *Lourd de Marionnettes* had been completely taken out of the fight. Two had been defeated by Honda Futayo and the other by Satomi Yoshiyasu who had joined the battle.

...I have determined that Satomi student council president has been well-trained.

After all, she had stabbed her upward-pointed blade into the right side of the *Lourd de Marionnette*’s chest.

The fixed idea that blades were swung downward caused a lot of people to stab down at their enemy.

However, she had instead pierced upwards.

...She cut through it while swinging upwards as if to split the collarbone.

Henri thought that had been an excellent decision.

One could easily remove a sword from a human by lightly twisting it back and forth to loosen the flesh, but a *Lourd de Marionnette* was made of metal. Twisting a thin Far Eastern blade would chip or even break it.

And so she had used an upwards swing.

A cut to the side required a difficult diagonal angle and required a greater length to the cut, but a cut out through the top required a much shorter length and a straight-up slash would be perfectly stable.

This was the method of someone who understood how to fight.

“She is this skilled and yet a part of the student council rather than the chancellor’s officers. I would like to face her, but...”

The blue canine *Lourd de Marionnette* had already circled to the Musashi side of the barricade and started to fight.

With a total of five Hexagone Française *Lourd de Marionnettes* in the fight now that the recovered ones had returned, the blue dog and Futayo split them up and swapped out opponents as they fought.

Satomi’s student council president and Futayo seemed to be fighting a purely defensive battle, but that was not accurate. They were blocking the *Lourd de Marionnettes*’ attacks to draw their aim.

They were acting as bait to open a path for the Musashi warriors to return.

And that had to be stopped.

“Everyone, full speed!!”

With that shout, they fully rounded the corner of their detour and began to run.

They continued on around to collide with their prey.

But that was not what happened.

“...?”

Henri detected a sudden sound with her auditory devices. It was a movement from the front of the Musashi.

Musashi had set up another bridge behind her unit and a group was making their way down it.

...*Musashi’s second formation!?*

There were approximately three hundred of them.

“Are they going to attack us from behind!?”

Tenzou and Mary stood at the front of the ranks. The two of them and Urquiaga had helped with the preparations and Mary now faced the others from the center.

She held Ex. Collbrande in its combined form and turned to the right.

“Now, everyone, as Master Neshinbara ordered, we will now attack the Hexagone Française musketeer unit led by Lady Henri. ...It is a pleasure to work with all of you.”

She gave a quick bow and everyone frantically straightened their backs and lowered their heads.

But Mary gave a troubled smile.

“Um, I am not actually the commander. You should be showing your respect to Commander Tenzou, not to me.”

“Judge,” they all replied with a smile.

The instant their gazes moved from Mary to Tenzou, their smiles vanished and they relaxed their poses.

“So whaddya want?”

“Y-you all sure got casual in a hurry!”

Anyway, thought Tenzou. Everyone here is a student originally from England.

And that was England itself, not Scotland or Ireland.

He had actually been a little hesitant to send her out in front of them after she had opposed Elizabeth, but thanks to seeing what kind of person Mary was in England and seeing Elizabeth’s acceptance of her, they seemed not to have a problem with her.

In fact, they seemed to sympathize with Mary for trying to preserve the old England.

...That just shows what kind of person she is.

I need to do my best here, he thought before speaking to all of them.

“Anyway, everyone. I believe this will be the first actual battle against other people for some of you but I believe you can put in a great effort here if you remember that you are protecting the Musashi.”

“Judge,” they said with a small nod.

Mary then turned to him.

“Let’s do our best, Master Tenzou.”

“Judge,” he said with a nod of his own and turned his thoughts toward her. “I’m sorry, Mary-dono. It may have only been on paper, but you were once a resident of Hexagone Française, weren’t you?”

“Do not worry.” She lowered her eyebrows in a smile. “I am now a resident of Musashi. Isn’t that enough, Master Tenzou?”

“O-of course it is!”

Everyone in their ranks began to whisper.

“This is my first battle, but I’m already feeling a desire to kill someone.”

“Yeah, what kind of guy brings up the girl’s past like that? I can really feel the desire to kill welling up inside.”

“Why does he have to be an English royal? ...Ahh, it’s welling up inside me! The desire to kill is growing!”

...Can I put a positive spin on this by saying I’m stirring up their desire to fight?

But Mary smiled and bowed toward them all.

“I have some snacks prepared for when this is over, so make sure you take some back with you, okay?”

“Judge!!”

They all frantically nodded and Mary nodded toward Tenzou before turning her back on them all. She raised Ex. Collbrande in her left hand and held Tenzou’s hand in her right.

He squeezed her hand and a faint strength squeezed back.

“Now, this is for the Justitia and pride of England and so that those virtues may be embraced and live on here in Musashi. The sword is a linchpin and the ship is freedom. Those aboard wield two powers, but they are no almighty saints.”

So...

“Bless those desperate to live, Ex. Collbrande.”

She nodded and let go of the sword.

While floating, it quickly rotated and stood straight up in front of her.

She grabbed its hilt once more, placed her hand against her forehead, and inhaled.

“Everyone, charge!!”

Asama sighed at the overlapping war cries coming from Takao.

She wore her shrine maiden outfit and held her bow, but she did not prepare an arrow.

She was using it for spatial tuning.

Instead of an arrow, several charms were wrapped around the string and she would pluck the string to send vibrations through them.

“We need to tune the ship’s ether pathways and distribute the force of the shells across different parts of the ship! But the vibration will get really bad in anything related to the water pipes, so please tell me if they’re headed in that direction. I can work to avoid that!”

She was speaking to people holding arrows or wearing shrine maiden outfits who were positioned at set intervals along the outer edge of the ship. They all nodded and began plucking their tuning bows.

The most powerful of the attacks on the Musashi would be dealt with by the gravity barriers or armor rackets wielded by the powerful students like Mitotsudaira. However, they could not handle most of the smaller shells falling in parabolic arcs or the damage from fragments of shells.

And so the smaller shells were being intentionally ignored by the gravity barriers.

“Music!!”

She plucked her bow to tune accordingly. The tuning distributed the impact to the armor.

The damage was still there, but it spread through the ship along the ether fuel pipes to lighten the impact and lessen the damage to light scrapes.

...It’s like distributing a terrible injury into light scratches across your entire body.

A bad enough injury would never fully heal and leave a bad scar, but scratches almost always healed on their own and left no scarring.

She was not sure if they could reduce the damage that far, but it was worth doing.

...Of course, if the attacks continue long enough, the entire ship will be destroyed.

Neshinbara had made this decision because it was a small-scale battle.

Novice: “A Tsirhc version of this has already been adopted using their authority to ‘distribute’, but with something as large as the Musashi, managing the distribution is difficult and it would be dangerous without someone at Asama-kun’s level in charge. If the distribution shifted too heavily toward the engine division or somewhere similar, it would all be over.”

That meant her actions here had real meaning and the people helping her would feel the same about their own actions.

All of those lined up and plucking their bowstrings had Shinto-related or music-related part-time jobs. Some were from different nations, but they all held their bows or analogous instruments.

“I see. Then feel the musical power of the Crossdressing Shrine Maiden Army ‘Yamato Takeru’!!”

“No, this is a job for the screaming gagaku punk of the Orthodox Doujin Shrine Maiden Band ‘White Cover’[\[3\]](#)!!”

“Wait! It’s time for the Platonic Idealism Band ‘IDE-ON!’ to cross national borders!!”

...Our Shinto groups have reached unprecedented levels of chaos over the past few months.

With that earnest thought, Asama felt working to protect the ship like this was perfect for a Shinto worker who cleansed impurities. *And the shrine’s protective charms have been selling like crazy lately!* she thought while triumphantly clenching her fist in her heart.

Suddenly, a sign frame appeared.

Wise Sister: “Come to think of it, it’s been a long time since I saw Asama not shooting anything.”

Me: “You’re right, sis. It’s been so long since I saw her not shoot something that this is worrying me.”

Wise Sister: “That’s right, foolish brother. It is worrying. After all, she claimed shooting things to purify them was a way of fighting off bad luck, but she was actually shooting everything for the bad luck itself. ...In other words, she’s a bad luck junkie!”

...Kh! I can’t type a response when using both hands to pluck my bow! Shinto has failed me!

No, this is fine, she pouted in her heart. No matter what they say, I don’t shoot anything while on the job. I need to stick to jobs like this and live a peaceful life from now on.

...Yes, it isn’t a shrine maiden’s job to shoot anything. For example...

Me: “Shrine maidens sure have it tough. Not only is shooting things part of their job, but they have to deal with all the tentacles too. I’ve been studying with porn games lately, so I know all about what shrine maiden’s do on the job!”

“No! That’s just in porn games! I promise!!”

She accidentally shouted her response out loud and messed up the distribution enough for water to rocket into the air from a fountain in Tama’s nature district.

She frantically made a correction and slowed her breathing.

...C-c-c-c-calm down.

We’re under attack and it’s my job to protect us. You could call this a shrine maiden defense, so...

At that point, she heard Naomasa’s voice from the right.

“Nwah! Mito! I messed up my control!!”

“Eh?”

Asama turned to the right. Jizuri Suzaku had passed Mitotsudaira an armor panel, but the powerful wind of the shelling blew it off course.

The silver chains frantically caught it, but it would not arrive in time for Isaac’s next bullet.

Not good, thought Asama just as Mitotsudaira and Naomasa turned toward her.

“Hurry!”

“W-with what!? Why do you sound like you’re expecting me to do something without telling me what it is!? C’mon, Hanami, you tell them too!”

But when she looked over, Hanami was averting her gaze and setting up the usual shooting spell.

“See, Asama-chi!? Hurry up and intercept it just like your own Mouse predicted!”

...Um, y’know...

Well, whatever, she thought. I don’t really want to shoot. That’s right. I’m only doing it because they told me to. And if this hits, it will do a lot of damage. I’m the only one that can do anything right now, so it isn’t like I want to or anything. Nope, not at all. I’ll just set up a fixed pathway for the dispersion and...oh, dear. It looks like I really have no choice. To say it like Masazumi, this is truly regrettable. Oh, it really can’t be helped. Not at all. Heh heh heh.

“Hit!!”

After a great roar and burst of light from the outer edge, Neshinbara muttered to himself.

“I’m glad to see Asama-kun is in top form today.”

“Heh heh heh. That junkie shrine maiden just fired a counter to the enemy’s high speed shell. Just how fast can she fire?”

Me: “She’s got to have researched how to strengthen her spell.”

“Probably,” said Neshinbara just before he heard voices from the southern end of IZUMO.

But these were not the voices of Tenzou’s unit as they pursued Henri’s musketeer unit. These voices came from the woods even further south.

“So they are here! This is the non-human unit of Hexagone Française’s regular army!”

Two hundred people burst from the woods like the wind and most of them were beastmen. They had their muskets on their backs, but they raced across the grassy plain while holding their specialized weapons or no weapons at all.

The beastmen were headed toward Tenzou’s second formation that pursued Henri’s unit. They were going to attack them from behind.

Neshinbara’s eyebrows rose when he saw their speed.

“Wow, they really are faster than humans! And it’s amazing they can keep that many people so organized!”

“Heh heh heh. War nerd, is it just me or is this making you happy!?”

“I-I am not happy about this! O-oh no. E-everyone is in so much trouble!! They’re like living material for my novels!!”

“This guy’s hopeless,” muttered the others as Neshinbara finally gave an order.

“Second formation, split apart!”

The second formation obeyed Neshinbara's order while the beastman unit pursued them.

Simply put, they split apart.

The back half suddenly applied the brakes. The split occurred just as they were taking the corner to pursue Henri's musketeer unit.

Everyone in the back of the unit was non-human. They were primarily beastmen who were skilled at hand-to-hand fighting. They waved toward those continuing on who were either shadows or winged races.

"Take care of Lady Mary!! And keep an eye on that ninja so he doesn't try anything funny and can't get too close!"

"Judge!" replied those continuing on. "Make sure you hurry back! And don't get too badly hurt!"

"Blades and bullets aren't gonna kill us!!"

Those staying behind turned to the enemy charging from the southern woods.

"Honestly, I wish our secretary's prediction hadn't been so accurate."

"Judge. It's non-human vs. non-human. We don't have any weapons that will work on us, so it comes down to our physical bodies. In other words, we're acting as a wall here."

"Well, that's fine."

They all took low stances and a half-tiger beastman bared his fangs.

"We're the up-and-coming group that sank into the darkness of England, the land of monsters and spirits. They're the group that claims to be the originals while working with the humans. Even after a hundred years of fighting, we couldn't settle which side was stronger. If it'll let us continue that fight, our stupid chancellor's idea might not be all that bad. ...Let's see who's the strongest."

Meanwhile, the enemy roared. The Hexagone Française beastmen and giants charged forward in lowered stances of their own and they let out a shout.

“Enough talk! You have forgotten what it is to eat humans and you have lived in idle sloth! You have no right to speak of us as equals!”

“Is that so?” replied a girl with sheep’s horns on the Musashi side. She tied the sash on her armored uniform before continuing. “Listen. We’re a good judge of the people we see. After all...”

A moment later, the dozen or so people at the front of the charging Hexagone Française unit were knocked over and blown away.

“We happen to know some humans who people call demons.”

Some new figures appeared in front of Musashi’s non-human unit while wrapped in wind.

The four people wore modified Far Eastern uniforms.

The Hexagone Française unit stopped their charge and commented on the academy emblem on their chests.

“The six coins! Are you the Sanada Ten Braves!?”

“Indeed we are,” said the man standing at the head of the four.

He wore a long cloak and was of medium build. His narrow eyes were bent in a smile and he bowed his head toward his enemy while stroking the cloth bags attached to his uniform in places.

In that instant, a sudden change came over the front row of the non-human unit.

“...!?”

Blood sprayed from their necks and they flew backwards.

“What!?”

The large beastmen prepared for a fight, but the young man with the cloth bags only slowly raised his lowered head.

And he opened his smiling mouth.

“Now then,” he said. “It is time for us outsiders to join in.”

Chapter 23: Outside Exister

CHAPTER 23

"Outside Exister"



What makes an appearance
When you are in a pinch
Even if you did not ask for it
Point Allocation (Old Friends)

What makes an appearance

When you are in a pinch

Even if you did not ask for it

Point Allocation (Old Friends)

The four Sanada ninja confronted Hexagone Française's non-human unit on the grassy plain.

The scent of blood began to fill the air, but the young man with cloth bags remained in a relaxed stance. He looked across his enemies again and nodded.

"Hello. I am Unneeded #5, Anayama Kosuke," he said slowly. "We are Sanada ninja. I hope we have a chance to work with each other in the future as well."

Next to him, a woman held up a new metal fan sword.

"I am Unneeded #7, Unno Rokurou. I need to make up for yesterday."

She smiled bitterly and a girl stood behind her.

This girl embodied the word "small" and she performed some quick stretches before waving toward the enemy.

"I'm Unneeded #4, Isa. Nice to meet you."

"S-sure," said the Hexagone Française unit with a wave back at her.

Unno tilted her head at them and patted Isa's back which was only at her own waist height.

"Just so you know, Isa here is the second oldest in our group. And she's not even long-lived."

The Hexagone Française non-humans exchanged a glance before finally reacting.

“Ehhhhhh!?”

“Ah, they’re creeped out! Roku, that’s mean! As long as they don’t find out, it isn’t true!”

Unno laughed loudly regardless and the final ninja said, “You shouldn’t deceive people.”

He was tall and skinny enough that he looked about to break and he bent his body a little at the waist.

“Unneeded #10...Kakei Juuzou.”

A fire burned at his mouth, but it did not come from a cigarette. He held a fuse between his lips and he quickly turned his back on #5 Anayama who stood up front.

“You take care of this, Ana. Sasuke may have told us it’s our turn, but I don’t like being the center of attention.”

“I thought as much.”

Anayama took a breath and a step forward.

He spread his arms toward the Hexagone Française group and nodded.

“Now then, everyone.”

As soon as he spoke, Hexagone Française fired. One of the giants used the rifle he held in his fingers.

However...

“Oh, dear.”



Unno Rokurou

Isa Nyuudou

Anayama Kosuke

Kakei Juuzou

The flying bullet burst in front of Anayama's eyes. It sounded like stone being struck and Isa scowled at the scattering sparks.

“Juuzou, your fuse stinks. I hate cigarettes.”

“Sorry.”

Kakei rubbed her head with a smile and Anayama nodded.

“Now then, everyone. We are here today in order to protest the damage to the trade ship that Lady Yoshitsune left here. That is our official reason. However...”

His smile deepened.

“Yes, this is a sort of publicity for the Sanada clan.”

“Publicity?”

Rokurou smiled and answered Hexagone Française's question.

“It's about the Testament descriptions.”

Asama: “Publicity? What does that have to do with the Testament descriptions?”

Novice: “The Sanada clan has some historical circumstances and that means they have to advertise themselves.”

Wise Sister: “Heh heh heh. The nerd is getting full of himself already!”

Me: “Neshinbara needs to get to the point quicker. It's hard to make jokes like this.”

Novice: “Kh! I-I was just about to get there!”

Smoking Girl: “Just get on with it. So what is this publicity for the Sanada clan? Their ninja Ten Braves are pretty famous. Even I've heard of Sarutobi Sasuke or Kirigakure Saizou, but what is it they have to publicize?”

Novice: “Judge. In the Far East, the final confrontation between Hashiba and Matsudaira is split between the east and west factions and takes place at Osaka. Sanada is a small clan, but they split themselves between east and west to ensure they survive.”

Silver Wolf: “Judge. That’s right. And Sanada Nobushige, their commander who controls the Ten Braves, joins Hashiba’s Western Army. Do you understand what that means? The Mouri clan leads the Western Army and that’s Hexagone Française who they’re fighting now.”

Asama: “So the Ten Braves are showing off what they can do to the Mouri clan that leads the faction they’ll eventually join?”

Silver Wolf: “Judge. That is exactly what it means. That’s why the Sanada clan is currently -... Ah, Tomo! Another shell is coming!”

Asama: “Hit!!”

Wise Sister: “That one sounded nice. ...So, what? Are the Sanada Ten Braves helping us while publicly announcing that they’ll eventually join the Western Army?”

Silver Wolf: “Yes. According to the Testament descriptions, Sanada does not join Hashiba until the fall of Takeda. While Sanada is a small nation, they have enough skilled elites to make this an important issue. They can be very determined.”

Neshinbara remained silent as he listened to the others explain the situation.

...I have to keep quiet.

Yes. This silence proves I am not a history nerd. It’s hard, but I have to resist. It’s for my reputation.

But...

Mal-Ga: “The glasses nerd sure is quiet. It’s kind of creepy.”

Novice: “Do you want me to talk or don’t you!? Make up your mind!”

Mal-Ga: “Guys need to show some independence!”

He grabbed the sign frame and threw it to the floor, but Michizane quickly displayed a new one. He thanked the Mouse and turned to Kimi who calmly held a cream puff.

“Want one?”

“No thanks.”

“Heh heh. But you’ll eat the bread your old girlfriend gives you.”

The blood drained from his face. A fearsome enemy had some embarrassing information on him.

“W-wait! I’m trying to work, but time out! Where did you learn about that!?”

Mal-Ga: “Yes, where *could* it have come from?”

Novice: “Was it you!? It was, wasn’t it? It had to have been!”

Four Eyes: “What does it matter?”

“Yes, yes. It looks like the girl understands,” said Kimi. “More importantly, look. Sanada is beginning their advertisement. We should be watching as their future enemies, right?”

The first movement from the Sanada ninja came from #5 Anayama as he walked forward.

He slowly closed in on the Hexagone Française non-human unit.

“Musashi, we will assist in stopping Hexagone Française because ‘Sanada’s cargo will be damaged at this rate’. But if we fought as your primary force, the Testament Union would not be happy. Instead, we will stick to the bare minimum.”

Without waiting for a response from Musashi’s non-human unit, he turned his smile toward the cautious enemy.

“The only weapons we will use are our techniques and blades. Killing you would leave a bad impression and be terrible publicity, after all. ...But don’t get upset if we end up driving a blade into your heart.”

“Do you really think you can!?”

The Hexagone Française non-human unit lowered their stances in preparation.

The instant he arrived within ten meters of them, the dozen or so on Hexagone Française’s front line moved in unison.

“...”

They all collapsed.

“What!?”

The rear line of the Hexagone Française beastman unit saw the entire front line sway, tilt backwards, and finally collapse as if someone had pulled them.

All of their necks had been ripped open.

A large gash had appeared in the gap between the bone and the muscle connecting their solid breastbone to their neck.

The wound was deep, but non-humans could regenerate quickly. Regardless...

“They won’t be able to breathe properly for a few minutes, so they can’t rejoin this fight.”

All of a sudden, Anayama stood among them.

The surprised Hexagone Française non-humans tried to surround him, but...

“He’s gone?”

He had vanished. They all faced each other and looked in either direction.

But an attack did arrive.

“...!?”

Several geysers of blood shot into the sky.

The scattering arcs of blood were red and black and their rapidly increasing speed and quantity refused to stop.

“...!!”

The gushing blood rushed along the curve of the surrounding figures.

The race began at the necks of those who had tried to surround Anayama and it followed the path of countless slashes.

“Ahh!!”

All of those who had been attacked, looked at the others surrounding them, realized they had met the same fate, and opened their eyes wide. The area was filled with surprised faces turned in every direction.

“You!”

Someone gave a shout of confusion about their comrades’ conditions.

All of those who had surrounded the ninja had fallen out of step, but it did not end there.

“Is it my turn now?”

“It’s a pain, but I guess I should help too.”

Number #7 Unno with her metal fan sword and #10 Kakei with his fuse stepped forward.

Kakei kept his hands in his pockets as he gently bent his tall body and moved toward the enemy.

“Please, just let me defeat you. That will be easier for all of us.”

“I’d prefer to dance.”

Their conflicting desires were both granted. As blood spray filled the air like mist, Unno seemed to dance as she sliced at the remaining ones with her metal fan sword, and Kakei sighed.

“...Sorry.”

With that, a hole opened in the chests of those who had yet to collapse.

They were bullet holes. With his hands still in his pockets, Kakei shot the nearby non-humans one at a time. And it did not matter if his target was a beastman, a demon, or a spirit.

“Sorry about that. ...These are silver bullets.”

Decorations of blood scattered and danced and the non-humans collapsed.

About thirty of them were taken out almost immediately.

“Don’t let it shake you!!”

With the front line gone, the circle of non-humans bent and tightened in.

It tightened in on #4 Isa who had stayed back at the center of the circle as the other three moved ahead.

“Oh?” said the short girl as the enemy circle quickly closed in on her. “Um, Roku! Juuzou! Come help your senior! Aren’t I cute!?”

“I don’t care!” shouted back Unno. “You rank higher than us, so do something yourself!”

“Personally, I think near you is the most dangerous place to be,” added Kakei.

While gashes continued to appear on the enemies, Anayama appeared with a smile on his face.

“Should I help you? I am only the next rank down and we could view it as an inspection.”

A portion of the enemy circle looked surprised at his sudden appearance, but the non-humans rushing at small Isa prepared their attacks first.

Most of the beastmen used their powerful bodies as their primary weapons. Their claws and fangs were the foundation of their close-quarters combat.

“One down!!”

The howling of weak War Cries sounded as they attacked Isa. It almost looked like they were mindlessly rushing toward their food.

When he saw it, Kakei groaned, brought a hand to his forehead, and covered his eyes.

A moment later, all of the enemies around Isa vanished.

Everyone there saw it.

Isa was there, but the surrounding enemies were not.

However, they had not actually vanished and Rokurou simply frowned and muttered to herself.

“You’re making this exciting again, aren’t you?”

She was looking at the area around Isa, except up in the air.

The group of enemies had been blasted high into the sky.

The reason why was obvious: something had appeared around the girl.

They were two fifty-meter heavy god of war arms.

The giant arms were covered in black armor and they floated alongside Isa’s own arms.

The spell spinning wheel expanded on her back made sure those steel arms emulated even the smallest twitch of her arms.

“Miiiiikoshi Nyuuuuudou!”

She spun around and her words flowed out as if in song.

“Sawwww right through youuuuuu!!”

She swung her arms outwards and toward both the sky and the ground while keeping her balance.

After several dozen sounds of impact, the people flying through the air were all knocked outwards.

Every single person on the ground within range of her had been sent flying.

The noise was much like something wet being crushed.

She had scattered them.

None remained and the wind her arms created blew away the bloody mist that Anayama had used to decorate the air. All that remained were the bodies

collapsed on the ground, the four ninja, and the English and Hexagone Française non-human units facing each other from either side.

“Right between the two sides,” said Anayama. “It’s a good spot for publicity, but...”

“Right,” agreed Rokurou. “We need to save face for Lady Yoshitsune.”

The other three nodded and faced the same direction: the Hexagone Française unit.

However, the non-humans did not falter. They instead prepared for a fight.

“What’s this? All we did was take care of the ones in a rush for some glory. There’s still over half of them left.”

“That’s right,” agreed Anayama. “It would make for a poor advertisement if we let it end in an instant.”

The Hexagone Française non-humans laughed and the one in the lead looked up to the sky.

“We will obey the great vice chancellor.”

They all launched their bodies toward the ninja.

“And use every last ounce of strength!!”

Those words were joined by a sound from the battlefield.

Musashi’s second unit, which had originally been their target, had reached Henri’s unit.

Henri clicked her tongue and turned toward the pursuing enemy.

...Did they speed up by splitting their unit in two!?

This enemy had plenty of speed. Trying to run would only get Henri's unit attacked from behind and stopping would make them perfect targets for the enemy's momentum. *In that case*, thought Henri as she forced only herself to stop.

"I will stop the initial attack! Everyone else continue on and join with Armand's- ..."

She trailed off because she had spotted a new figure in front of Armand's unit charging in from the north.

It was a demonic long-lived automaton wearing a white Far Eastern uniform.

"Houjou Ujinao! Are you backing them here!?"

By the time she cried out, a battle had already begun.

The two hundred *Belle de Marionnettes* of Armand's unit were firing and otherwise attacking Ujinao.

The automaton's attack on Ujinao was precise. She had two swords at her shoulders and two at her waist, so eight of them charged ahead of the leading group to outnumber her swords two-to-one.

And at the same time...

"Fire!!"

The light of spell gunpowder flashed and gunpowder smoke floated into the air.

Two hundred bullets accompanied the eight charging automaton's. Ujinao's first move was to take a small step back.

"Mathematically, this is quite a simple attack."

Her body swayed to the side and she swung her arms without opening her eyes. She swung the first upwards and the second downwards so they crossed.

“Solution found.”

The four swords cut down all the bullets flying toward her.

The two hundred shots were taken out in an instant.

This produced a sound much like sand hitting something and the sparks resembled a band of light. The light accurately followed the path of the blades and scattered shards of metal with almost calm movement.

She could not catch a few of the bullets, so they slipped through.

“Oops.”

She twisted her head.

With an automaton body, she could raise her senses to several hundred times the speed of a human's, so the flying bullets might as well have been standing still. It did not matter that her eyes were closed.

“Your shots too accurately target my vitals. Sound is more than enough.”

That was when the leading eight burst through the gunpowder smoke.

The automatons had already drawn their large swords. Two performed iai strikes from above, two from the middle, and two from below. The last two performed jabs.

However, Ujinao sheathed her swords as they approached.

“Ejection drawing.”

With that, four swords were fired from her shoulders and waist.

She did not use gravitational control or her fingers. A spell accelerated the swords from the ejectors held on with chains and her gravitational control grabbed at them and spun them around.

The swords literally shot toward the approaching automatons.

They had completely misread the speed of her attack and were caught off guard.

“...!!”

Each sword cut down the two automatons in its path.

Ujinao heard eight solid sounds.

The snapping of wires sounded like twanging bowstrings.

...*Oh?*

But the automatons did more than just be destroyed. They all grabbed the blades that cut through them and stabbed those blades deep inside themselves.

They stole her weapons. The eight automatons literally made the swords a part of themselves by burying them inside their slender bodies, two to a blade. If one stabbed a blade through her stomach or lower chest, another would skewer her own body onto the blade sticking from the first one's back. Together, they would hold the blade in place.

“We will be taking these.”

With that, the eight collapsed to the ground as four masses. Some had their limbs smashed and some were sliced entirely in two, but Ujinao had lost her weapons regardless.

“Now then,” she muttered while raising her hands.

She did not even try to look and her eyes remained closed.

But she could hear them. They were trying to remain silent, but she could definitely hear the earth rumbling.

...Are they coming?

The remaining automatons were charging forward with their various weapons.

And they did not all attack from the front. Many circled to the left and right or even diagonally behind her and some even held their swords high to attack from overhead.

The attack came in two waves. The first was a small group of about fifty and the second was about one hundred forty.

Ujinao thought of it like a tsunami.

She was unarmed as the fifty of the first wave attacked with their blades, guns, and striking weapons.

They rushed in at full speed to crush her, but she did not fall back.

She only gently angled herself backwards.

“As dolls, you should already know this.”

She dropped her raised hands so they were spread at her sides.

“Dolls have a top and a bottom.”

A moment later, the leading wall of fifty or so automatons was crushed.

The leading *Belle de Marionnettes* were smashed like they were made of glass.

Their clothes tore and their internal components – everything from their abdomens to their internal frames and even wire cylinders – were ripped and broken into useless scrap.

Dust scattered.

The other *Belle de Marionnettes* did not understand why because their comrades had been destroyed before they could record anything.

The following group only knew that Ujinao had fired something at high speed.

Even so, they did not hesitate to charge in.

“Master Armand!”

The *Belle de Marionnettes* all sensed the same thing.

Something had appeared overhead and it was even larger than the attacking tsunami they formed.

It was the floating island’s crust.

As they held Ujinao in place by attacking in waves, Armand would drop the crust to crush them along with the enemy. Armand’s technique would crush them too, but they did not mind. After all, a *Belle de Marionnette*’s true form was not their body. It was the soul that formed their core.

“If we are victorious, our bodies can be replaced!!”

With that cry, they did not hesitate to continue their charge.

But that was when they heard a voice. Ujinao had muttered two quiet words without opening her eyes.

“I see.”

She swung her hands backwards.

“Let me bring out something a little heavier than before.”

She raised her arms to shoulder height and something could be heard exploding.

The sounds continued as if blooming and something appeared in the air over her shoulders.

“Odawara Specialty – World’s Steepest Mountains.”

A great many objects were spatially ejected with scattering shards of light indicating the cover had been removed. They were approximately one thousand large swords that would be automatically drawn using divine spell gunpowder.

Ujinao spoke to the great number of swords that were grouped together in wooden containers.

“Higane, Kurakake, tower up front.”

Three hundred blades could be heard being ejected from their scabbards and the movements of Ujinao’s fingers caused them all to rotate around their hilts.

They shot out and sliced.

The wave of automatons approaching from the front exploded.

The three hundred swords’ speed meant unavoidable destruction for the enemy, but it was not enough to completely stop them. All of the automatons tried to reach her with only their undamaged parts.

“...!”



Those automatons were not alone.

While they fell apart and approached as if clinging to the air, the giant piece of crust fell behind them.

This was Armand's attack and he intended to crush Ujinao with its weight.

Ujinao responded with a single action, but that was not to fall back.

“Myoujou.”

With that single word, a fifteen meter cannon-like sheath was ejected above her right shoulder.

The white sheath's inner shell appeared first, the outer shell appeared later, and the clasps were spatially ejected to fix the two shells together

By the time it was complete, torii emblems had appeared along the cannon-like sheath as if slicing it into countless pieces and the rotation of the torii emblems accelerated.

The tip of the long sheath began to tremble and Ujinao placed her hand on the giant hilt sticking out.

“Close the valley.”

As soon as she spoke, she drew Myoujou.

She pulled her body to the right and she snapped her right fingers in front of Myoujou's hilt.

With a great noise, light burst from the sheath's opening and the long sword was ejected.

The sheath moved backwards to eliminate the recoil, but the sword flew forward at tremendous speed.

At the very last second, Ujinao rotated to the right and touched Myoujou's hilt with her left hand.

To use the force of its ejection as an attack, torii emblems appeared on Myoujou's blade and applied a high speed rotation. Even as it left her hand, it drove forward while twisting as if extending away from her and left behind only an afterimage of light.

“...!!”

And then Myoujou drove tip-first back into the sheath that had returned from the recoil.

She nodded as soon as it did.

“This is over.”

With those words, everything was destroyed.

It was all sliced apart and scattered.

The wave of automatons, the lowering crust, and everything else was cut, crushed, and sliced. Every object in Myoujou's path had a slight deviation along that line.

“No one can climb them.”

The shockwave arrived a moment later and it all exploded.

Now then, thought Ujinao as she put away World's Steepest Mountains and gently brushed off the downpour of scattering fragments.

“Futago.”

She drew two swords from the air and faced someone.

“How about it, musketeer? You can always gather their cores later.”

Armand stood beyond the scattered piles of rubble with his hips lowered in a defensive stance.

...He did well to avoid that.

Henri of the Three Musketeers had spatially ejected weapons much like World's Steepest Mountains. That had likely allowed this Musketeer to make a reflexive decision. He had moved the crust frame to protect him and that had successfully defended against her attack.

It seemed he had attempted to save the other automatons too, but the musketeer unit automatons had rejected his attempt and covered for him instead. That was likely an expression of their hierarchical relationship.

However, Ujinao merely saw it as a mistake on her part.

And so she made a suggestion to make up for it.

“Will you help me go back over my math?”

“Gladly. Especially if a special duty officer level like me can keep the Odawara chancellor busy without using a pincer attack.”

He then changed the subject.

“Hey, how would Sagami, home of *Belle de Marionnettes*, judge us?”

“Let me tell you one thing.”

She gave a quick smile toward the ground and spoke while already launching her body forward.

“If a doll has someone to take good care of them, they are doing an excellent job.”

Just as she said that, she heard a sound behind her.

...Is that...?

It was the sound of splitting metal and bursting machinery. In other words, it was the noise of a breaking god of war.

“Oh?”

Some of the Hexagone Française gods of war fighting in front of the bridge to central Musashi had been destroyed.

And all three of them were destroyed at once.

Henri saw the scene to her right as she ran.

The *Lourd de Marionnettes* battling Musashi's vice chancellor and Satomi's student council president were being defeated.

There had been five including the reactivated ones, but three of those had been defeated simultaneously.

Counting the three that had been destroyed earlier, six had now been defeated.

...But this is odd.

Vice Chancellor Honda Futayo had likely destroyed one and she wanted to say the Satomi president had likely destroyed another.

...But the Satomi president had been fighting a defensive battle ever since her first attack.

To hold back the greater numbers of the enemy, she had used her *Lourd de Marionnette*'s great defensive power to focus on defense while the Musashi vice chancellor would attack with Tonbokiri whenever she saw an opening. That had been their strategy earlier.

Henri remained certain the Musashi vice chancellor had defeated one *Lourd de Marionnette*.

However...

...What happened to the other two that were defeated!?

If two *Lourd de Marionnettes* of Hexagone Française's main force had been defeated at once...

“Was it Chancellor Satomi Yoshiyori's Yatsufusa!?”

That was exactly what she saw push the two defeated machines out of the way like a gate and step forward.

The white canine heavy god of war had eight jewel-shaped engines arranged in the center of its back and it held a large sword that sprayed a mist from its thick blade.

“That is the sword-cannon Murasamemaru!”

The silence brought by Yatsufusa's appearance on the battlefield did not last long.

Two of Hexagone Française's *Lourd de Marionnettes* almost simultaneously attacked Yatsufusa from the left and right.

One swung its blade down from above on Yatsufusa's right.

With only a small delay, the other swung its blade up from below on Yatsufusa's left.

Yatsufusa already held Murasamemaru to the right, so its right arm would be held in place while the true attack was made on the lower left.

Yatsufusa simply moved in response.

The white *Lourd de Marionnette* lightly stepped to the right and swung its right arm outwards.

The action looked casual and everyone gasped. With the *Lourd de Marionnette* approaching from the right, it did not have the space to fully swing its blade.

However, something did hit: Murasamemaru's pommel. The hard metal pommel jabbed into the center of the *Lourd de Marionnette*'s chest like the butt end of a spear.

In an instant, Yatsufusa's arm returned as if the jab had failed, but that was not what had happened.

The pommel had not left the enemy's chest.

Yatsufusa shook its wrist and elbow to eliminate its opponent's momentum.

And over the course of an instant, the enemy *Lourd de Marionnette* truly did stop.

That was when Yatsufusa swiftly tugged on the pommel to remove it from the enemy.

“Risking your life for victory is an admirable deed.”

Yatsufusa rotated its entire body toward its right arm while swinging the pommel up in a high-speed backhand blow.

The pommel struck the Hexagone Française *Lourd de Marionnette*.

The white canine *Lourd de Marionnette* spun like a top and its right hand drove into the enemy craft like a stake to the lower stomach. That enemy was crushed and flew through the air.

Yatsufusa continued rotating to sweep away that defeated enemy.

A color raced along the tip of that rotation.

It was the color white. That was Yatsufusa's color and the color of mist.

Yatsufusa pulled back its elbow to turn the backhand pommel attack into a proper sword strike.

It rotated further, swung its elbow like a whip, and moved its wrist so the spray of mist rotated with it.

It was rotating toward the other *Lourd de Marionnette* charging in from the left.

The cooperation between right and left was gone. The right *Lourd de Marionnette* was supposed to give time for the one on the left to rush in, but that had failed and Yatsufusa spun around.

However, the left *Lourd de Marionnette* did not falter.

To combat Yatsufusa's rotation, it held its thick short sword with both hands, ducked down, and charged in from the shoulder. It was trying to slip below the rotating Murasamemaru.

Meanwhile, Yatsufusa moved to intercept it.

However, it did not use Murasamemaru to do so.

Its right arm continued carrying its blade along the same path and it used its left leg instead.

Yatsufusa held up its foot and struck the left *Lourd de Marionnette* as if slamming its heel into the machine.

Its heel struck the enemy's right collarbone near the back.

The sound of impact shook the air

Having its collarbone stepped on from the back caused the left *Lourd de Marionnette* to lose balance and fall.

Yatsufusa used the force of the collapsing enemy pushing back on its right foot to accelerate its rotation.

Yatsufusa spun and finally struck with Murasamemaru.

But instead of the surrounding *Lourd de Marionnettes*, the blade moved to the west.

Isaac had fired a pair of shells toward Yatsufusa.

Yatsufusa made a one-handed strike toward the twin shots tearing through the air, but it continued rotating afterwards.

And...

“_____!”

A bestial roar filled the battlefield.

It was not Yatsufusa's voice. Murasamemaru's blade shook and produced the roar while practically gushing mist.

The roar travelled west and the air split along its path.

A transparent line of shimmering travelled out ahead.

It reached as far as Isaac and shook slightly.

At some point, all noise had vanished.

Then, Yatsufusa performed its follow-through motions.

“Weep, Murasamemaru.”

That straight line of empty air exploded and cried.

The cry raced after the tremoring line, wrapped around it, scattered rain and mist, instantly sliced through Isaac's two bullets, and continued on.

Meanwhile, Isaac lowered down into a crouching position.

The path of the sliced air covered approximately a kilometer and it was soon colored by rainclouds and mist.

“_____”

As soon as Yatsufusa placed Murasamemaru in its scabbard, everything along the line burst and rain scattered everywhere.

Yoshiyasu watched the events before her in a daze.

...This is insane.

Even if they were outnumbered, he had charged into a defensive battle and immediately taken out two of the enemy.

And when he had taken out the next two...

...How did he know the two on his left and right were a diversion for the gunner!?

One good method of quickly and consecutively defeating two enemies approaching from the left and right was to turn your initial attack into a rotation, just as Yatsufusa had done.

However, that rotation had been to the right, so he had turned his back to Isaac and the others.

The enemy had tried to use that fact.

Their target was Satomi's chancellor who was using the Satomi flagcraft Yatsufusa and Murasamemaru. Two gods of war without officer positions was a small price to pay for a target like that.

The speed with which they put together that attack proved just how much training Hexagone Française's god of war unit had. However...

...I supposedly received the same training as him.

She looked to Yatsufusa's flight devices, back, and weaponry.

“...”

She compared them to the countless scratches and chipped blades of her own weaponry and that comparison led her to a simple conclusion.

...I'm inexperienced.

How much easier would it have been if her training was so insufficient that she could believe the difference came from the comparative abilities of their gods of war and weapons?

She felt as if nothing about her could ever hope to reach that back standing so close in front of her. And that feeling was reinforced by the voices the Musashi's students were directing toward Yatsufusa.

Those rising voices gave cheers and praise.

...Yes.

She understood that it was him they were relying on.

And to convince herself of that, she listened more carefully to the cheers coming from the Musashi. She noticed a few voices that were particularly loud.

“Nwoooohhh! This is amazing material! I'm so glad I got to see it in person! War is so great! Wartime is perfect for an aspiring author!”

“Sis! Sis! Isn't that god of war amazing!? It cut through two of those giant shots at once! Does that put its power at two Asamas!?”

“P-please don't compare a peaceful shrine maiden to a god of war! I'm not like that!”

“Heh heh heh. That’s right. You aren’t like that. You, white Satomi god of war! If Asama was serious, that would only be the beginning! Underestimate her and you’ll be blown away by her Asama Power!”

“Could you all stop saying what could easily cause international incidents? Really now.”

These people are hopeless! thought Yoshiyasu in a deep, calm part of her heart.

She looked forward and saw Yatsufusa’s head lowered and shoulders shaking.

“Hey, Yoshiyori. We’re in the middle of a battle here.”

“Oh, you’re right, Yoshiyasu. We are. But...”

“What?”

“Are you scared?”

She shouted at the back before her eyes.

“Of course not!!”

“Is that so?”

He sounded almost relieved. She then noticed Yatsufusa’s right arm looked somewhat limp, so she limited her voice to only reach him.

“Yoshiyori, don’t tell me...”

“It was the one-handed strike to raise my speed. Let’s just say a second attack would be difficult. This means both Satomi and I are inexperienced, Yoshiyasu.”

The admonishing tone in his voice irritated her a little.

“Then I will-...”

“Fall back, Yoshiyasu.”

She did not have time to ask why. The reason made itself immediately apparent.

It was a silver god of war. The flight devices on its back were raised, but it did not fly. Instead, it glided along the ground with the speed of a shell.

“That is Hexagone Française’s flagcraft Palais-Cardinal!”

Yatsufusa moved forward and the two clashed after the seventh step.

As the white canine god of war and the silver feminine god of war fought, the battle on the infantry level moved to accept that change.

The Hexagone Française god of war unit began to fall back.

The functioning ones helped evacuate and carry the others while Yatsufusa and Palais-Cardinal began to fight in their place.

Palais-Cardinal sent out attack after attack in quick succession and Yatsufusa received them.

Yatsufusa’s right arm was damaged, but Palais-Cardinal did not hold back. Seventy percent of the attacks to Yatsufusa’s right were sent inward out and they drove Yatsufusa left and to the north.

In the center of the open battlefield, Adele’s advance unit was left motionless due to the flanking attack from Henri’s unit.

“And we were so close!”

The situation had nearly fallen to a free-for-all, so Yoshiyasu’s god of war could not move either.

Futayo remained, but...

Novice: “Vice President Honda-kun, remain on standby in front of the bridge.”

Tonbokiri: “You mean the enemy wants me to support the others?”

Novice: “Judge. They most want to avoid having Adele and the others return to the Musashi, so we need to leave someone at the Musashi’s entrance who can intercept on the infantry level.”

For one thing...

Novice: “If Palais-Cardinal defeats Yatsufusa and charges in, who else can stop it?”

Tonbokiri: “Judge. Understood. But what makes you think the enemy can send in more reinforcements?”

Novice: “They have yet to send out their chancellor, student council president, or even vice chancellor.”

“Do you understand what that means?” said Neshinbara’s text.

Novice: “We are using everything available to us for both offense and defense while even getting help from other nations, but they still have forces to spare. We may have defeated eight gods of war...”

That was when they made their appearance.

Far to the west, they appeared from the side hatches of the Hexagone Française warships.

They were gods of war and they too wore red coats over their blue armored outfits.

Novice: “Thirty-two of them and all heavily equipped. If they can send out that many from the ships that have landed, just how many do the ships overhead hold?”

Adele remained motionless three hundred meters from the Musashi.

The Hexagone Française side had deployed a new formation around the Musashi forces.

Meanwhile, the anchor piles making up the barricade had been almost entirely destroyed or pulled from the ground, so they would be no help defensively.

...This isn't good.

It was currently 3:08.

How much damage would they take if the enemy used the remaining seven minutes to charge in?

To prevent that and to defend, Adele and her unit could not move.

That meant they would not return to the Musashi even if it meant taking damage themselves.

...And the same goes for the 1st special duty officer's group.

She then realized something.

She may only have noticed because they were stuck there for defense.

“The Palais-Cardinal and the musketeer unit attacking us are falling back?”

They must have gone ahead to retrieve the individuals from the destroyed god of wars and the cores of the automatons. Palais-Cardinal had been facing Yatsufusa, but it swept its opponent aside with a blade and moved away.

“It's too bad, but we can leave the rest to the main force.”

With those words, Henri and Armand made a large leap to the west.

But they did not leave.

They only fell back three hundred meters to join with the approaching main force.

That left the four hundred of Adele's advance unit and the three hundred of Tenzou's unit that had joined with them.

...That gives us seven hundred in all, but all of us have been worn down already.

Many of them were out of spell charms as well as internal Blessings.

Meanwhile, Hexagone Française's main force of thirty-two heavily equipped gods of war approached.

The imperial guards formed the center of the infantry group that numbered approximately two thousand.

With one side nearly out of strength and the other with strength so spare, the two sides faced each other from three hundred meters apart. That was the situation as Adele saw it.

Now, she said in her heart. What are we supposed to do?

In Oxford Academy's main hall, England's Trumps and the other high-ranking individuals checked the footage from IZUMO. The Fairy Queen sat in her throne and Vice President Dudley spoke from her side.

"Wh-wh-wh-what is the situation on the battlefield, Your Majesty."

Elizabeth nodded, brought a hand to her chin, and looked to the sign frame in front of her.

The screen showed a mermaid on a ship reading a book inside an aquatic bed and ship controller that resembled both a cradle and a harp.

"Cavendish."

"Eh? Oh, right. Testament. What is it, Your Majesty?"

“Sorry for interrupting your reading. You can finish that later. ...What is that look for? You’re ruining your looks, so smile. You have three seconds. ...Now, tell me what Hexagone Française is after. Why would they use such a roundabout formation?”

“Um,” said Cavendish as she opened a few sign frames.

The sign frame indicated her current location was the midpoint between England and Hexagone Française. She was out with Drake and the others to ensure Hexagone Française’s fleet did not approach England.

“Okay. Based on our reconnaissance information, they are trying to display their intention to become the nation that will rule in the next generation.”

“That’s too long. Sum it up in five words.”

“ ‘They won’t allow any complaints.’ ”

“Testament. Well done. Now explain why that is.”

“Testament.”

Cavendish opened a few more sign frames and Dudley opened sign frames of her own to display the information Cavendish sent over.

“Are you listening?” began Cavendish. “Hexagone Française’s first objective was to draw out Musashi’s fighting force so the other nations could measure it. Their god of war unit fought Musashi’s vice chancellor and some others, but that tells the other nations that Musashi’s fighting force can be temporarily stopped as long as you have gods of war.”

“Continue.”

“Testament. The god of war unit was partially destroyed and had to retreat, but that is plenty of ‘damage’. This will prove to the Testament Union that they fought. However, that damage gave them the battlefield information needed to

safely deploy their main force and it allowed them to record information on Musashi's fighting force. They earned plenty from this."

"Earned?"

"Testament," replied Cavendish. "Hexagone Française's heavy god of war unit is powerful, but they must be conditioned to the weather and terrain to properly expel heat and achieve stable mobility. If they overheated or tripped during such an important event, their reputation among the other nations would drop. Hexagone Française has never entered IZUMO before, so the lightly equipped gods of war were sent in first to gather data on the land...and they carried out that role splendidly. After all, they also gathered plenty of data on Musashi's fighting force, they had Musashi set up their barricade, and they destroyed that barricade. That means..."

"They stripped Musashi bare and wore down their forces? Then tell me, Cavendish." The queen slowly asked her question. "What were Hexagone Française's musketeer units meant to do and what affect did the inclusion of Satomi, Houjou, and Sanada have?"

"Testament," replied Cavendish yet again. "Hexagone Française's musketeer units were to hold Musashi's warriors in place until the main force could be deployed. After all, there is a risk of the Musashi leaving the dock if those warriors escape."

And...

"Satomi, Houjou, and Sanada's inclusion must have been an unexpected turn of events for Hexagone Française, but it changed nothing in the big picture. Based on Hexagone Française's current formation, it would seem they were never too focused on the results of their automaton and non-human units."

"You mean those units were meant to eventually fall back if their initial strike was not effective?"

"Testament. Do you know what that means?" Cavendish went on to explain. "They are centering this on humans. The non-humans, automatons, and even gods

of war are disposable forces that are only there to support the humans' victory. If they stick to that, the Testament Union can't complain. They won't be able to find some excuse to interfere with Hexagone Française's victory. That is the ultimate purpose of Hexagone Française's formation. And..."

Cavendish hesitated before speaking to Elizabeth.

"Hexagone Française will become the ruler of Europe and they are displaying that intention in this battle."

"I see."

Elizabeth adjusted her position in the throne and crossed her arms.

Her eyebrows rose as she smiled and nodded a few times.

"When displaying your intention to rule, there is one thing that is absolutely essential."

"Wh-wh-wh-wh-wh-what is that?"

"What's that?"

Dudley and Cecil's questions deepened Elizabeth's smile.

"You'll see."

As soon as she said that, a new sign frame appeared. It showed a bare-chested man wearing a scarf and water goggles.

"Your Majesty, this is the Hawkins Fleet! We have confirmed new movement from Hexagone Française on IZUMO!"

That being...

"Hexagone Française's flagship Pension Versailles has launched King Louis Exiv!"

Everyone on the battlefield and everyone surrounding the battlefield saw it.

It was the sun.

Hexagone Française's Pension Versailles had landed in IZUMO's western land port and the white and gold flagship shook as it fired a ball of light diagonally upwards. The object audibly tore high through the sky and it trailed smoke and an afterimage of light.

At a point above everyone else, it did more than simply glow. It emitted definite light.

The Hexagone Française gods of war, warriors, injured, and all others raised their voices as one.

“Vive le XIV!!”

They got down on one knee and lowered their heads.

Pushed on by their unified cry and the enveloping wind, that sun dropped to the ground as if to tear into it.

“...!!”

The light shook IZUMO and truly did gouge out a large hole in the ground. However, the ground swelled up from there.

“_____”

With a great rumbling and shaking of the sky, a whirl of shimmering heat and steam whipped through the air. However, that was drawn in along with the wind that was blowing across everything.

The sun had landed right in front of Adele's group.

As they watched, the light disappeared and a fifty meter crater had appeared in the center of the battlefield.

In the center stood a single figure wrapped in shimmering heat.

It was a man.

He was tall and slender and the wind blew his long blond hair.

His slender face was pointed, but he had relaxed eyebrows and yellow eyes. His mouth was opened in a smile and his white teeth could be seen between his lips.

He brushed off his arms and then held his toned but still slender body.

“Heh. Nice to meet you, people of Musashi. I am Louis ‘Roi-Soleil’ Exiv.”

He was completely naked.

Chapter 24: Resident of Heaven

CHAPTER 24

"Resident of Heaven"



When
Did it end up like this?
Point Allocation (In Your Head)

When

Did it end up like this?

Point Allocation (In Your Head)

Amid the silence and the heated wind, Hexagone Française's forces got down on one knee to honor their king.

Meanwhile, everyone on the Musashi tried to give their own reactions.

This was a difficult situation to react to.

Mitotsudaira was covered in an unpleasant sweat and turned to Asama, Asama returned the eye contact with a look that pleaded "Not yet! Not yet!", Oriotorai focused on eating her soba on Murayama, Suzu tilted her head inside Musashino's bridge, and a sign frame appeared in front of everyone. In that sign frame, Neshinbara lowered down, counted to three, and raised his hands to time everyone's unanimous opinion.

"He's a copycat!!!"

"Heh."

Exiv gave a charming look as his hair blew in the wind.

"Who could be even remotely similar to someone as perfect and befitting of the title Roi-Soleil as me?"

"Well..."

Up in front, Adele's mobile shell turned back and everyone else followed suit.

Something stood directly behind Adele, but it was different from normal. The group split apart in surprise to move away from it and spoke with a tremor in their voices.

“Wh-when did he get here? And he’s wearing clothes!”

A fully dressed Musashi Chancellor Aoi Toori stood there.

Toori scratched his head, but puffed out his cheeks when he saw how everyone was reacting.

He then turned toward Exiv and raised a hand.

“Hey, could you wait a bit? I need to discuss something with my fellow students here. It’ll just take a minute.”

“I see. Well, a king does need patience. I will wait one minute.”

“He’s really doing it?” muttered everyone else, but Toori quickly turned toward them all.

“Okay, time for our discussion! Our topic is as follows: ‘Why are you all avoiding me like the plague!? Tell me why!’ Well!?”

They all exchanged a glance and they answered with Adele going first.

“Because you tend to cause problems.”

“You always show up where you’re least wanted.”

“To put it kindly, you’re in the way.”

“D-dammit! They gave serious answers! What a thrill!”

While the idiot shouted, Tenzou patted his shoulder.

The idiot’s eyebrows rose.

“Oh!? What is it, happy newlywed ninja!? Are you going to treat me like the plague too!?”

“No, but Toori-dono. When we had to soak in the sterilization pool before our elementary school swimming class, you ruined it for everyone by raising your hand and announcing you had peed in it.”

Vice President: “There certainly are a lot of unwanted memories about him, aren’t there?”

“Oh, c’mon. None of you get it! That was a way of challenging authority!”

He added “Right?” while elbowing Adele’s mobile shell.

She immediately brushed off his elbow, but he put it back.

“C’mon, Adele. I’m not a good speaker, so you tell them for me. Tell them all the good things about me! There’s plenty of those, right!?”

“Um, where exactly? I’d like to hear about them myself.”

“What!? You can’t tell!? For example, my waist actually fit when I wore Asama’s suit back in England! It was a little tight, though!!”

“Tomo! Tomo! A shrine maiden mustn’t shoot people! Calm down!”

“Umm,” said Adele’s mobile shell while using its large hand to tap Toori’s shoulder.

“Eh!? What is it, Adele? You want me to look forward!?”

He did so and found a naked man surrounded by shimmering heat.

“Heh.” Exiv brushed a hand through his hair and pointed at Adele. “It has been one minute. I assume you have completed your fulfilling conversation.”

He shifted his pointing finger from her and to the idiot.

“Now, I take it you are the one who has gained the support of his people by copying me.”

“He doesn’t have our support! He really doesn’t!!”

Evix remained unfazed even when faced with a protest from Musashi’s entire population.

On the other hand, Toori’s shoulders drooped. He then crossed his arms, turned toward the others, frowned, and whispered to them.

“Hey, what is with that guy? Why is he naked? It’s kind of creepy.”

“Recheck your memories!! And look in a mirror in the past!!”

He danced out of the way of their retort and faced Exiv again. He stood tall and gave Exiv a completely blank expression.

“This is my Horizon impression.”

He then glared at the man.

“I have determined you will catch a cold.”

“Ah! H-Horizon!? Wait until later to pull out Lype Katathlipse! Later! And Tomo! Why are you looking away and why are your shoulders shaking!?”

Exiv calmly nodded at Toori’s impression.

“Thank you.”

The Musashi group gasped, turned around, and mouthed a comment.

“Is he an idiot?”

Worshipper: “Has there ever been a report saying your brain withers away if you go around naked for too long?”

Gold Mar: “I’m having a hard time reacting after so many surprises in a row.”

Asama: “Still, I’m glad Toori-kun has made a friend. Very glad. Now, try to get along with your first...no, with history’s first civilized nudist.”

“Hey, I think Asama’s getting desperate. Is she okay?”

“Heh. Have your people begun criticizing you now that they see you can never compare to me?”

“What?”

Toori turned toward Exiv and found the man pointing at him.

Exiv shook his head once to whip his hair around.

“Listen, Musashi Chancellor. This shtick belongs to me.”

“Y-you just admitted it’s a shtick! You did! No fair! Are you trying to hog it to yourself!?”

Novice: “Come to think of it, Louis XIV loved plays and even acted in them.”

10ZO: “Th-this is clearly not a part of history that needed to be recreated!!”

But as everyone else grew worried, Toori crossed his arms again and looked to Exiv.

He frowned but still glared up at the distant man.

“In other words, you want to have a nudity battle with me?”

“Heh. Please make no mistake,” said Exiv. “Listen. I would win. ...No, it goes beyond that. I am the concept of nudity itself. Are you so deluded that you believe a normal person can oppose an absolute truth?”

“Hey, everyone. Did you hear this guy? He’s a complete nut-job.”

“Umm...”

While the others hesitated to respond, Exiv lightly waved a hand.

“Heh. I do not mind if the ordinary person does not understand. ...Listen, Musashi Chancellor. I saw your nudity on the divine television once, but it was not even worth seeing.”

“Huh? When was my nudity sent out to viewers around the world?”

“Heh. Our PR committee recorded Tres España’s attack before you arrived in England.”

“Oh.” Toori gave a nod of understanding. “You mean when that long-eared female teacher of a vice president grabbed my dick.”

Juana had been eating at the food stand while looking away from the divine TV, but the Musashi Chancellor’s sudden comment made her spit out the food.

“J-Juana!” cried Segundo next to her. “Are you okay!?”

“I-I am fine! Do not worry about me! But...um...”

She realized everyone was looking her way, so she quickly switched off the divine TV.

“This is banned! Louis XIV is banned! Walking around naked is simply indecent!! And the Musashi Chancellor is banned even if he is wearing clothes! We need to obey the history recreation and create an Index Librorum Prohibitorum!”

“Anyway.” Toori pointed at Exiv. “Y’know what? I have a lot more material than just being naked.”

“Oh?” Exiv tilted his head. “You were the one to ask for a battle, but you’re already admitting defeat and running away?”

Asama: “U-unlike Toori-kun, he’s actually being logical while he’s naked!!”

Marube-ya: “Is that supposed to be a good thing?”

Asama: “Um....”

“Heh.” Exiv struck a pose with a hand on his forehead. “Just to be clear, only I am allowed to be naked. After all, I am the Roi-Soleil.”

Wise Sister: Didn’t some silly person just say something about that man being logical?”

Asama: “B-before! He was before!!”

Mal-Ga: “That almost made some logical sense to me. I might be a lost cause.”

“Oh, c’mon,” said Toori with a quick laugh. “And who gave you permission to be naked? Well?”

“Heh. Does truth itself need anyone’s permission?”

“What?” Toori frowned. “You’re a person just like anyone else, aren’t you!? When did you become a god!?”

“Heh. From the moment I was born, mere human. After all...I was born naked.”

Flat Vassal: “What are we supposed to do about this?”

Silver Wolf: “Shh. Don’t encourage them. It’s dangerous!”

Novice: “Y’know, there’s actually a similar conversation in the novel I’m writing. The situation is completely different, though.”

“But,” said Toori as he shook his head and even sighed toward Exiv. “You’re stupid. You really are. Since you don’t seem to get it, let me explain. Listen carefully now. The truth is...I too was born naked. And that means I too was chosen by god.”

“Chosen by god?”

“Yeah.” Toori spoke quietly in the blowing wind. “And that means...we are the same.”

Exiv paused for a short moment.

When he turned back to Toori, he laughed and nodded.

“You really are stupid.”

“H-he said! He just said it!”

Despite everyone’s shouts, Exiv crossed his arms, stood in an S-stance, and took a breath.

“Sorry, but I alone am destined to be naked. When Hexagone Française suggested I inherit the name of Louis XIV, the Papa-Schola said the Sun King had to be someone with sunlight overflowing from his entire body.”

Hearing that, everyone gave a unified shout.

“So it’s *his* fault!!!”

“Former boy, we are receiving a flood of divine *posta* from Musashi.”

“Ah? I can guess more or less what they say, so ignore them. Those people will have forgotten all about it by tomorrow.”

“Listen,” said Exiv yet again.

He looked to Toori and shrugged.

“You are not cut out for nudity. For one thing, what is that thing you call a God Mosaic?”

“What? Don’t look down on Shinto, you Western nudist! Asama put a lot of work into creating that secret technique!”

Asama: “I-I didn’t! I really didn’t! It’s a standard spell! Um, Horizon, please stop removing the wall for your act!”

“Heh,” laughed Exiv with a smile on the corner of his mouth. “It is an Amaterasu-style optical camouflage spell, right? I will admit it has a long history as a Shinto spell, but it is simply too old-fashioned, Far Easterner. ...Listen. The age of mosaics is behind us. I am using a higher resolution spell. Yes...this is the God Fresco.”

Masazumi stood on Musashino’s deck while feeling truly glad she had not gone out there herself. She then spoke to Neshinbara, Kimi, and Yoshinao.

“Isn’t raising the resolution a bad idea? Wouldn’t that be a crime?”

“Hexagone Française is currently ruled by an absolute monarchy.”

“What a pain,” she muttered just before seeing sudden movement on the battlefield.

Someone rushed toward Louis Exiv through the kneeling people behind him. The person wore a female Hexagone Française uniform in a way that clearly did not follow the school rules.

“Is that...?”

Exiv brushed up his bangs in the gentle breeze.

“Heh. Musashi Chancellor, I am sorry, but you are no match for me. After all-...”

Before he could say anything more, an attack reached him.

A girl had rushed up behind him and immediately swung her long hair.

“Get on with the battle, you moron!!”

She sent a straight kick into the side of his back.

With the sound of flesh being struck, Exiv rotated halfway around and slammed into the ground.

“What?”

While everyone from Musashi tilted their heads, the girl casually approached Exiv and looked down on him as he partially got back up.

When he saw her, Exiv frantically got up, looked up at the girl glaring at him with her mouth spread horizontally, and gave a full smile.

“Terumoto! Could it be that you were so worried for me that you had to rush out here!”

“Don’t start it as a question and end it as a statement. ...There’s something wrong with your head. You’ve been wasting the world’s precious oxygen by wriggling around and making a pointless speech.”

“Heh. Terumoto, I just can’t help but go a little crazy in front of you. Now...”

He was still collapsed on the ground, but he took Terumoto’s hand, stood up on his own, helped Terumoto back up, and turned to the Musashi group.

“Allow me to introduce you to my wife, Mouri Terumoto.”

On Musashino’s deck, Masazumi observed the enemy through the telescopic sign frame Tsukinowa had opened.

...So that’s Mouri Terumoto.

Next to her, Neshinbara sighed.

“The decisive battle between Hashiba and Matsudaira is the battle of Sekigahara which leads to the attack on Osaka Castle. We will fight for the Eastern Army and the young Mouri Terumoto will command the Western Army. In other words, she is our future enemy.”

As if in response, Kimi sharply narrowed her eyes and bent her body forward to stare directly at Terumoto in the distance.

“So that girl is like the final boss for my foolish brother and Horizon?”

“That’s hard to say since the history recreation depends on interpretation. Hexagone Française opposes M.H.R.R., but Hashiba has joined M.H.R.R. and the Mouri clan is under Hashiba’s control according to the history recreation.”

“But,” said Yoshinao who sat to Neshinbara’s right. He brought a hand to his mouth as if hesitant to speak. “That Terumoto girl loses the Battle of Sekigahara, doesn’t she?”

“Judge,” confirmed Neshinbara.

Masazumi nodded and thought about Terumoto.

...That means she’s being led around by a cruel fate.

She kept that thought in her heart but decided not to sympathize with their enemy.

“Following the Battle of Sekigahara are the winter and summer campaigns on Osaka Castle,” she said. “The ultimate winner is the Matsudaira clan. The Testament Union gave Horizon Ariadust the name of Matsudaira’s heir at Mikawa, so she will be the victor.”

She had been given the name for her execution, but she would become the winner of history now that she had escaped Mikawa with her life intact.

“It’s ironic that their method of execution has made her the ruler of the Far East.”

She then had another thought.

...Does this mean our destination has appeared before us?

The destination of history and the opponent of their greatest battle stood before them.

Mouri Terumoto.

She was the ruler of the Mouri clan which was the western Far East’s greatest power, but she was destined to command a losing army. So why did she have such a strong connection with the chancellor of Hexagone Française, the ruler of Europe?

The man standing with her gave the answer.

Exiv supported her as if pushing on her back as he spoke.

“Terumoto is a wonderful woman.”

“What!?”

In everyone’s sign frames, Terumoto turned toward Exiv with a truly bothered frown.

“That’s just creepy. What are you talking about, idiot?”

Her comment sounded like a complaint or jeer, but Exiv reacted by kneeling in front of everyone and bringing his cheek to the back of her hand.

“Listen, Terumoto. You are a wonderful woman. After all, you never do what I want. That is why- ow ow ow ow ow ow!”

Terumoto reversed her hand and pinched at his cheek. Her face was tinged with red and she sounded annoyed.

“Don’t say that kind of thing in front of people. And besides, Exiv.”

“What is it, Terumoto? Is there something you want me to do? Just ask!”

He looked up at her while still kneeled and with her still tugging on his cheek.

She, however, continued glaring at him as she answered.

“Put on some clothes. That’s just common sense.”

The entire Musashi group lowered their heads and muttered to themselves.

Everyone on the Musashi exchanged a glance.

“Y’know... Getting mad like that is the normal reaction, isn’t it?”

“Our vice president has gotten lax lately, hasn’t she?”

“Is our only hope Vicereine Horizon the crotch-puncher?”

An unpleasant sweat covered Mitotsudaira as she listened to everyone’s reactions and she turned to Horizon who had arrived from the outer edge of the ship. The automaton pulled a cushion from somewhere and began drinking tea.

“Who would have thought I would gain such popularity for nothing more than punching Toori-sama’s penis. This is quite a dilemma. I must continue penis

punching if I wish for more popularity, but I will lose my popularity if that causes him to put on his clothes. ...I will continue punching regardless, of course.”

...Wh-what am I supposed to say to that!?

Suddenly, Horizon turned toward Mitotsudaira and their eyes met.

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

Mitotsudaira thought during their mutual silence.

...I-I really don't know how to adlib!

Wondering what to do, she frantically searched for help.

“Umm, Tomo! Tomo!? Why are you turning away from me!? You too, Naomasa!”

Horizon pulled out a charcoal grill and began cooking meat, but that was likely meant to tempt Mitotsudaira over.

...Ah, but this smell. That's Hida beef!

“Nn.”

Her nose twitched and she detected an odd smell.

...Hm? This smell...

It was the smell of cooking meat, but it came from a different direction.

“ ...? ”

Is that from the southern woods? wondered Mitotsudaira with a mental tilt of the head.

She could not be sure because the wind had weakened, but the smell of bloody meat being cooked was coming from somewhere.

She initially looked across the battlefield, thinking it could have happened there.

...That isn't it.

There was no fire on the battlefield. All she could see was the faint shimmering heat surrounding Louis Exiv.

As she wondered what it was, Mouri Terumoto opened her mouth on the other side of the battlefield. She also used her chin to indicate the Musashi Chancellor on the front line.

“Look, Exiv. Even that idiot is wearing clothes.”

Mitotsudaira and everyone else looked to the right. Neshinbara had already opened new sign frames for them all and had begun his timing gestures.

“That’s just a fluke! A complete fluke!!”

After speaking in unison with the others, Adele spoke to the idiot next to her.

“I-isn’t that right, chancellor? This was just a stroke of good luck for us, wasn’t it? Wasn’t it!?”

“What!? Adele, if you keep calling this a fluke or good luck, I’ll strip right here! I’ll show you a real fluke! I’ll strip and show you a real fluke! Wait, that sounds kind of dirty, doesn’t it!? Right, Adele?”

“P-please stop talking to me! Just leave me alone!!”

Adele saw Terumoto look at her and sigh. Terumoto then lowered her shoulders and turned to the idiot.

“Sounds like you guys have it rough too. It must be the same everywhere.”

“Do not even think about calling them the same, Terumoto!”

Still kneeling, Exiv brought a pleading hand to his chest.

“Listen! That boy with the filthy mosaic is a fake nudist who wears clothes! I am the real deal! And please listen, Terumoto. My nudity is needed for the history recreation, so putting on clothes would give the other nations a reason to attack! Besides, have I ever worn clothes in your presence even once!?”

“Oh, sorry. I heard everything up to the opening ‘ “ ’, but then I stopped listening.”

“Heh. It delights me to know you heard even that much!”

“Umm...” began Adele while afraid she was being rude. “I’m not sure if this is the best way to put it, but why is...uh...Chancellor Exiv, future ruler of Europe, with...well...the future loser of...”

“Oh, that.”

Terumoto waved a hand and nodded.

She might actually be a good person, thought Adele while Terumoto sighed and spoke.

“Don’t worry about my feelings. Mouri Terumoto is set to become the leader of a losing army. The name was seen as an incompetent figurehead and the symbol of Mouri’s decline, so no one wanted to inherit it. So, well...”

So...

“I thought I’d take on that burden. ...That’s all I can do. I’m just meddling, so it’s not like I’ll actually lose anything.”

“But Terumoto.”

Exiv rose, stood next to her, and supported her back with a hand.

“That is exactly why I need you.”

He turned toward Adele...no, he looked across everything in that direction.

“Heh. Fine then. Before the fight, I will make an announcement as Louis Exiv, the ruler of Europe who is currently faultless.”

...Eh?

This sudden announcement brought Adele and everyone around her to a halt.

“Starting now, Hexagone Française will adhere to the history recreation in accordance with interpretations and the trends of the times.”

...What?

Masazumi understood what Exiv had said but could not accept it.

It was true that the history recreation could change at a moment's notice according to certain interpretations or the trends of the times, but what did it mean for him to explicitly state that here?

...It can't be...

Words escaped her throat while her pulse raced.

“It's possible they're going to ignore as much of the history recreation as they can in the name of interpretations!”

Exiv's words hinted at two possibilities.

“Yes. As the Roi-Soleil, I will illuminate two paths for those who bask in my glory.”

One was...

“It is possible we will protect the Mouri clan and Hexagone Française from Hashiba’s forces. And the other...”

Once he said that, Masazumi noticed something.

It only lasted a split-second, but Terumoto turned toward Exiv with the ends of her eyebrows lowered. It was a worried look that seemed to be telling him to stop.

But Exiv gave a quick laugh before continuing.

“It is possible I will make Terumoto the victor.”

“This world is filled with delinquents, isn’t it!? Hm!?”

“Are you sure you don’t mean it is filled with your kind of person, former boy?”

Innocentius did not bother responding to Galileo’s comment. He instead looked to the *cornice firma*.

“Splendid! Now, that is the conceit of a ruler. Isn’t that exactly the choice you’d expect of the nation sent the Logismoï Oplo of Kenodoxia and Hyperephania? Hm!?”

But...

“If they will allow interpretations in the Testament descriptions and history recreation, the Testament Union has nothing to complain about! If they will help curb the growth of P.A. Oda and Hashiba, the Testament Union will borrow their authority as ruler!! And...”

And...

“If their interpretations allow them to crush Matsudaira and turn the provisional rule over the Far East into absolute rule, that too is the guidance of the Testament!!”



Louis Exiv

Mouri Terumoto

“Listen,” said Exiv. “The method is simple. I, Terumoto, the Western Army, Hexagone Française, and the Mouri clan will crush and rule over Musashi, the Far East, the Eastern Army, Matsudaira, and Ariadust.”

And on top of that...

“As long as I take the surname of Matsudaira as a second inherited name, history will continue on its proper course.”

Now they’ve done it, thought Neshinbara.

They had used this short-term battle on the small land of IZUMO.

...He just announced Hexagone Française’s perfection, didn’t he?

He was saying the Testament Union nations no longer had to rely on Musashi to oppose P.A. Oda. He was saying the Tsirhc nations already fighting on the front lines could overcome their battles with P.A. Oda with this new ruler of Europe.

“Musashi Chancellor, do you remember what you said in Mikawa?” asked Louis Exiv. “Let’s see who’s strongest.”

“That’s right,” said Exiv. “The Thirty Years’ War and the Sengoku Period are filled with new rulers, overthrown rulers, alliances, betrayals, rises, falls, life, death, prosperity, ruin, victory, and loss, but there is one thing we can say about all that.”

That being...

“The ruler is the protagonist of history and all others are no more than his foils.”

So...

“History will be created by the two of us: the Roi-Soleil and the moon queen who uses the foundation of my radiance to always insist I accept the opposite of myself. ...Therefore, I suggest you find a place for yourselves in the history we will create, Far Easterners. If you are the land of the rising sun, then you can live while looking up at that sun.”

He looked to the Musashi Chancellor who stood in front of him.

“Now, how about you surrender and leave the rest to us?”

Exiv thought to himself.

...There is no way he will accept this offer.

Nevertheless, it was worth asking. This was a possible future, so they would constantly be asking each other the same thing from now on.

And so he held out an open hand.

“How about it?”

As soon as he asked, the Musashi Chancellor played scissors.

Everyone froze when they saw the two outstretched fingers held toward the open palm. They also fell silent.

“_____”

But the idiot took a victory pose toward the Musashi. He even had a tear-filled smile on his face.

"I wooooooooooooooooonnnnnnnnnnnnn! Hexagone Française is mine!"

“Ehhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!?”

The first to react was Henri of the Three Musketeers.

“Objection! Objection!” she shouted while stepping forward. “He clearly played after the fact! Didn’t he, princess!?”

“Eh? Oh, I suppose.”

“Hm? Princess! Princess!? Why do you seem so unconcerned!? This is a national emergency!”

“I’m not sure we have to take this seriously.”

“That is correct,” agreed Exiv. “He would need to make such a proposal during an official confrontation. ...And I am willing to accept such an offer.”

“Waaaaah!!”

Everyone shouted to stop him, but Exiv only laughed.

“Heh. I am the Roi-Soleil. I would never lose at something as simple as rock-paper-scissors.”

“Is that so?” Terumoto glared up at him. “What were you planning to play?”

“I am the sun, so I always play the spreading paper, Terumoto.”

“Don’t play rock-paper-scissors if you’re always going to play the same thing!!”

Terumoto looked over at the idiot.

“Hey, that didn’t count because it didn’t follow the rules.”

“What!?”

The idiot turned and pointed at her with his eyebrows raised.

“What do you mean!? That’s not playing fair!”

“Go look in a mirror!!”

He pouted his lips toward the countless shouts behind him but soon turned back toward Terumoto and Exiv while taking a breath.

“Hey.”

Before continuing, he brushed a hand through his hair in the wind.

“How about we pretend that whole Mikawa thing never happened?”

Everyone in the main hall of England’s Oxford stopped moving.

Elizabeth, Dudley, Howard who held a bag of sweet breads, Cecil who was sucking out the contents of a cornet, and everyone else were completely motionless.

But after emptying the contents of the cornet, Cecil held it up and looked at everyone through the hole.

“Very interesting.”

Past experience allowed those in K.P.A. Italia to recover more quickly. After a sip of water, Innocentius set the water bottle on the side table.

“ ... ”

Unsure what to do, he stood up and began pacing around his chair while groaning.

“If you are angry, you can always shout, former boy.”

The motionlessness reached the Musashi as well.

However, Neshinbara contacted everyone within the blowing wind. After synchronizing with Ohiroshiki, Persona-kun, and all the others, he raised his hands on the count of three.

“Ehhhhhhh!!?”

Everyone on the Musashi and everyone deployed in front of it shouted in unison.

“Waaaah! You idiot! You idiot! What do you think you’re saying, you idiot!?”

Masazumi scolded him through a sign frame that suddenly appeared, but Toori tilted his head.

“Oh, c’mon. Look, everyone. This girl is getting mad at me without even saying why. ...And Seijun. Why do you keep calling me an idiot?”

“But. You... y-y-y-y-you... Aoi, wh-what are you saying!?”

“I’m more confused about what *you’re* saying. Besides, think about it logically for a second. This naked guy is using what I said in Mikawa for all sorts of things, so I’ve decided I must have said something I shouldn’t have. I’m trying to stay positive by admitting my mistake and retracting what I said. Yeah, um, like that! Like that!”

“The representative of a nation can’t overturn his international statements at the drop of a hat!!”

“Yeah, but I’m only human. Of course I’m gonna make mistakes. I’ve got humanity to spare. I’m the Renaissance. So shouldn’t I correct that by adding in a little Baroque? Also...”

Still facing Masazumi’s sign frame, he pretended to cry and pointed at Exiv.

“Th-that naked guy’s acting like I’m trying to take over the world. Sob.”

“You said you were! And don’t pretend to sob! It’s creepy! From the world’s perspective, you’re undoubtedly the bad guy calling for world domination!!”

“I hate people who assume things about people!”

He nodded and pointed at Masazumi in the sign frame.

“You oppressive girl!”

“You’re quick to make assumptions yourself! And...hey, idiot. Turn me toward Hexagone Française for a moment.”

“Sure, sure.”

Toori turned the sign frame displaying her face.

“Um...”

While she began speaking, Toori circled behind the sign frame, grabbed the edges, and lifted it up so her face aligned with his own.

“I am terribly sorry, Hexagone Française Chancellor and Student Council President.”

With his head hidden by the sign frame, Toori began dancing like the thousand-armed goddess of mercy and striking sexy or bust-enhancing poses. All the while, Masazumi spoke from where his face should have been.

“The thing is, our chancellor and student council president ate something funny last night and isn’t able to think straight. He has been making odd statements since morning and...”

Just as Toori made a moaning pose, Masazumi stopped talking and glared at Tsukinowa on her shoulder.

“Do it.”

“Maa.”

The sign frame suddenly exploded. The idiot rolled once across the ground but quickly stood back up with a sooty face and curly hair. He immediately charged toward a newly-opened sign frame.

“S-Seijun! What do you think you’re doing!?”

“Oh, I see a performer god explosion wasn’t enough. Should I take it to the next level?”

The idiot dodged the issue with a quick dance and used a hairdressing comb charm to fix his hair.

“Anyway,” he said while tapping on the sign frame. “I guess I went and admitted I was wrong for nothing. Okay, Seijun, let them have it.”

“Judge,” she said with a nod.

Toori stroked his hands along her virtual body line extending below the sign frame, so she prepared her next spell.

“We will recognize Hexagone Française’s previous declaration as the words of one of the world’s nations. Also, Musashi has something to say to Hexagone Française and the Mouri clan.”

She pointed at them as she spoke.

“Are you listening?”

She took a breath before continuing.

“Musashi will not hesitate to use our right to wage war with any nation possessing a Logismoï Oplo. It was that resolve that carried us through England.”

So...

“It would be best if you treated us as an equal nation, future ruler of Europe.”

I see, thought Exiv.

...Musashi is exactly the sort of nation I thought it was.

That was not a bad thing. After all...

“Heh. So you desire the same path as us, landless wandering nation.”

But...

“That will require an absurd amount of effort.”

It had for his nation. Massive amounts of personnel, money, and time had been invested in obtaining his inherited name and expanding the nations’ power. On a more personal level, his life had been targeted more than a few times.

If mankind wanted to limit that kind of effort to just the one instance, he felt it was best for Hexagone Française to bear that duty.

“Your actions will accomplish nothing but doubling the effort, Far Easterners.”

He raised his right hand to stop them.

He was giving the signal for an attack.

And in accordance with that raised hand...

“_____”

There was wind, there was movement, and there was noise.

The people, automatons, non-humans, and gods of war kneeling around him all stood.

The wind blew and that movement brought a chill to the air. Everyone remained silent, but...

“Wait!”

A sudden voice came from the northeast.

Those in the east and those in the west continued facing their enemy while turning just their gazes toward the voice and the person who stood there.

A boy stood on the side road cutting through the windbreak forest that separated northern and southern IZUMO.

The wind blew his clothes which bore the emblem of P.A. Oda and the school emblem of P.A.M.

“Hey.”

He wore a coat and had bandages wrapped around his upper body, but that did little to hide his brown skin.

He wore P.A. Oda pants that had been dyed darker than normal and his legs were spread wider than his shoulders. The pants had the number 4 stitched in white.

His black hair blew in the wind and he looked across everything through his black sunglasses.

“Listen, all of you.”

He opened his mouth and spoke with the corners of his lips slightly raised.

“Try not to get so carried away. You have some guts to just ignore me and P.A. Oda.”



Sassa Narimasa

His words and appearance brought everyone to a stop, but the Musashi Chancellor looked around and made a show of spotting Mouri Terumoto in the crowd.

“Hey, is he a friend of yours? You act and dress kinda the same.”

“No, I don’t know him. I do know *of* him, though.”

“Who is he?”

“Testament.” Terumoto used her chin to point at the P.A. Oda boy. “I think he’s one of the two who make up #4 of P.A. Oda’s Six Heavenly Demon Army. His name is Sassa Narimasa.”

“Yeah.”

Narimasa’s hair was tied back and he brushed it back with a comb he pulled from his vest coat. He then took one, two, and three long strides to enter the battlefield.

His casual actions led the northern parts of Hexagone Française and Musashi’s formations to go on the defensive.

However, he just continued walking.

“Don’t worry. I’m here on my own. I was on my way for some fun at Hashiba’s place, so Toshi’s not with me either.”

He stopped walking about thirty meters from both sides and he stayed there.

Everyone turned diagonally to face both their original enemy and this new opponent.

But despite the two armies facing him, Narimasa kept his expression intact and stuck his hands in his pockets.

The wind blew.

This was the heated wind of the Roi-Soleil and Exiv spoke along with that movement of the air.

“Heh. How crass. I do not recall calling for the likes of you.”

“Musashi Chancellor.”

Narimasa ignored Exiv and called for Toori with the black eyes of his sunglasses looking directly at the boy.

“I have business with you.”

Hearing that, Toori followed Narimasa’s gaze. He looked down at his own chest before turning around and reaching Adele’s mobile shell.

“Hey, Adele, he says he’s got business with you. Looks like the time has finally come. He’s confessing.”

“Eh? Wh-why are you talking to me!? I was trying to escape reality by reading some manga, so please don’t drag me into some bizarre reality!”

“Judge.” Toori nodded and turned a serious look in Narimasa’s direction. “If you want to raise her affection, give her manga as a present. Remember that, okay?”

“I hear you gave quite a welcome to Toshi.”

Toori froze when he heard that. After a moment, he held out his right palm to tell Narimasa to wait and he opened a sign frame.

“Wait just a moment. I seriously need to ask the others about this. So wait just a little bit.”

Me: “Hey, hey. What am I supposed to do? This sunglasses guy is the type who ignores anything you say to him. What do you think I should do?”

Asama: “Well, I have a good solution for that. Try thinking about what someone should do if they’re dealing with you. Yes, that should work perfectly.”

Me: “Eh? So I should raise his affection by giving him a porn game as a present?”

Uqui: “You fool. A porn game will lead to catastrophe if you choose the wrong genre.”

Me: “Oh, you’re right. I’ve been playing too many games without choices lately, so I think it dulled my instincts. ...But I don’t think I have enough information to play that sunglasses guy’s route.”

Worshipper: “Yeah, all you have is that comment about us ‘giving quite a welcome to Toshi’. It’s going to take some gambling to choose right here. And there aren’t even any walkthroughs on the divine network.”

Wise Sister: “Maybe there’s a character introduction page on the P.A. Oda or P.A.M. sites.”

Silver Wolf: “Um... Ehh? Wh-wh-what are all of you talking about? Is this what happens when you play too many porn games?”

After a while, Toori raised a hand toward the sign frame and gave his thanks.

He then turned to Narimasa and pulled a box from below his uniform.

He held it up in both hands with a giant grin on his face.

“This is what you wanted, isn’t it!? This is the magistrate game based on international shudo rules! It’s called Toshi and Matsu! On the second playthrough, there’s even a scenario with you as the lead. The published reviews gave it the super high score of pine, pine, pine, and plum, so...”

He gave a thumbs up.

“I highly recommend it!!”

Narimasa pulled his right fist from his pocket, raised it, and ran full speed toward Toori.

As soon as Narimasa began to move, Neshinbara gave an order to everyone. It was short enough to shout aloud and it was quite straightforward.

“Come on home, everyone!!”

“Does your pathetic nerd pride keep you from telling them to run away?”

“What does it matter!? And we only have five minutes left, so we can endure the rest closed up inside here!!”

And so he yelled one last word.

“Hurry!!”

Everything began to move.

First, the front lines of the Musashi forces turned around and began to run while activating defensive charms on their backs.

Next, Hexagone Française pursued and the warriors with decent initial velocity shot ahead of the heavy god of war unit.

“Wait, Musashi!”

As soon as they began to run with their acceleration spells, Musashi’s fleeing front line split apart. One of every two running students had moved behind the other.

This opened several one-man paths and Musashi Ariadust Academy's track team appeared inside them.

“You're ours!!”

They used all their strength to spin around and throw a spear shortened for throwing. The spears had blades embedded in the tip and tail feathers, so they acted as a counterattack against the pursuing Hexagone Française warriors.

As they threw, the athletes took a light step to send their bodies slightly into the air. This allowed the students passing by on either side to hook their arms around the athletes' arms to carry them.

“Hurry!!”

They rushed onward while still carrying them.

However, the Hexagone Française warriors had not been slowed.

The silver god of war named Palais-Cardinal standing behind those warriors raised its right arm.

Louis Exiv struck a pose atop the giant silver hand while facing forward.

“Heh.”

As soon as he laughed and nodded, Palais-Cardinal took a certain action concerning Musashi's flying spears and fleeing students.

It threw Louis Exiv.

The nude ruler flew in a collision course with his fleeing enemies and the weapons they had thrown.

He drew a direct line that was clearly going to hit them.

However, shimmering heat enveloped him in midair and he brushed up his bangs.

“How about I show you the fate you have brought yourselves?”

He flew over the leading Hexagone Française warriors, flipped around in midair, and snapped his fingers.

A light sound and a hot wind travelled through the sky and something appeared behind Exiv. It was a pair of devices that resembled a disk.

“Testamenta Arma ‘Corpus Prudentia – Vetus’. Its effect is simple. It gives destructive power to light in accordance to the intensity of that light. This Testamenta Arma is meant to sweep away the darkness,” he explained. “With my Testamenta Arma, even the smallest light can protect the people from the darkness of the night. Of course, that light is powerless during the day, but...”

Corpus Prudentia emitted light. The light formed feathers and constructed wings with a total of twelve on the right or left.

“If that small light is given my constant divine protection of sunlight, it gains the power to shine even during the day.”

The light formed pressure around Louis Exiv.

It pushed on the air and the wind blew about. Its range extended past ten, twenty, and even thirty meters. It quickly spread beyond fifty meters, devoured the flying spears from above, crushed them, and scattered them.

“The Roi-Soleil has arrived!!”

As he spread his arms and cried out, the color black suddenly raced through the sky.

Darkness swallowed up the small sun descending on daytime IZUMO.

With a creaking sound, the color black rose from Tama's outer edge, left claw-mark paths behind, and swept over the sun.

"Lype Katathlipse. I have reached sixty percent output with standard usage."

The cannon sounded like a crying voice as it devoured the sun.

However, a sudden change came over it.

The darkness split open.

"...!?"

Horizon wrinkled her brow in confusion as the tearing strike scattered roughly through the air like a deflected whip.

Lype Katathlipse's power vanished while leaving claw-mark paths in the sky.

It faded away and revealed the sun which was still descending toward the fleeing students. Exiv remained in the center of the light, but...

"He's unhurt!"

Mitotsudaira and the others worriedly saw Exiv holding something in his previously spread arms.

It was a two-handed club.

The striking weapon looked like the colors white and black had been stretched, twisted, torn apart, and gathered back together. Everyone from Musashi had seen weapons with a similar texture.

"That looks a lot like Lype Katathlipse and Aspida Phylargia."

They gulped before raising their voices as one.

"It's a Logismoi Oplo!?"

“Indeed,” said Exiv within the falling light. “Both Hexagone Française and Tres España were sent two Logismoï Oplo. Both of those pairs are counted as one of the seven deadly sins, but they were originally split apart making eight...no, nine deadly sins. Of course, as they were split, they are weak for a Logismoï Oplo. Mine makes its user’s power invincible so long as he maintains his pride. While the word invincible sounds impressive, it is limited to an individual, so it is difficult to turn the tide of a battle with.”

But...

“This is Phos Hyperephania. When combined with my power as the Roi-Soleil and my Testamenta Arma, no Logismoï Oplo could be more wonderful.”

He smiled and the light grew. The flying spears were no longer simply deflected. They were crushed, scattered, and finally turned to shimmering heat. Loud wind, heat, steam, and shimmering whirled around the light as it arrived above a few dozen of the Musashi students who had failed to escape in time.

“Look up!”

He descended.

“Raise your eyes!”

He dropped down.

“Worship my future great nation!”

He continued on.

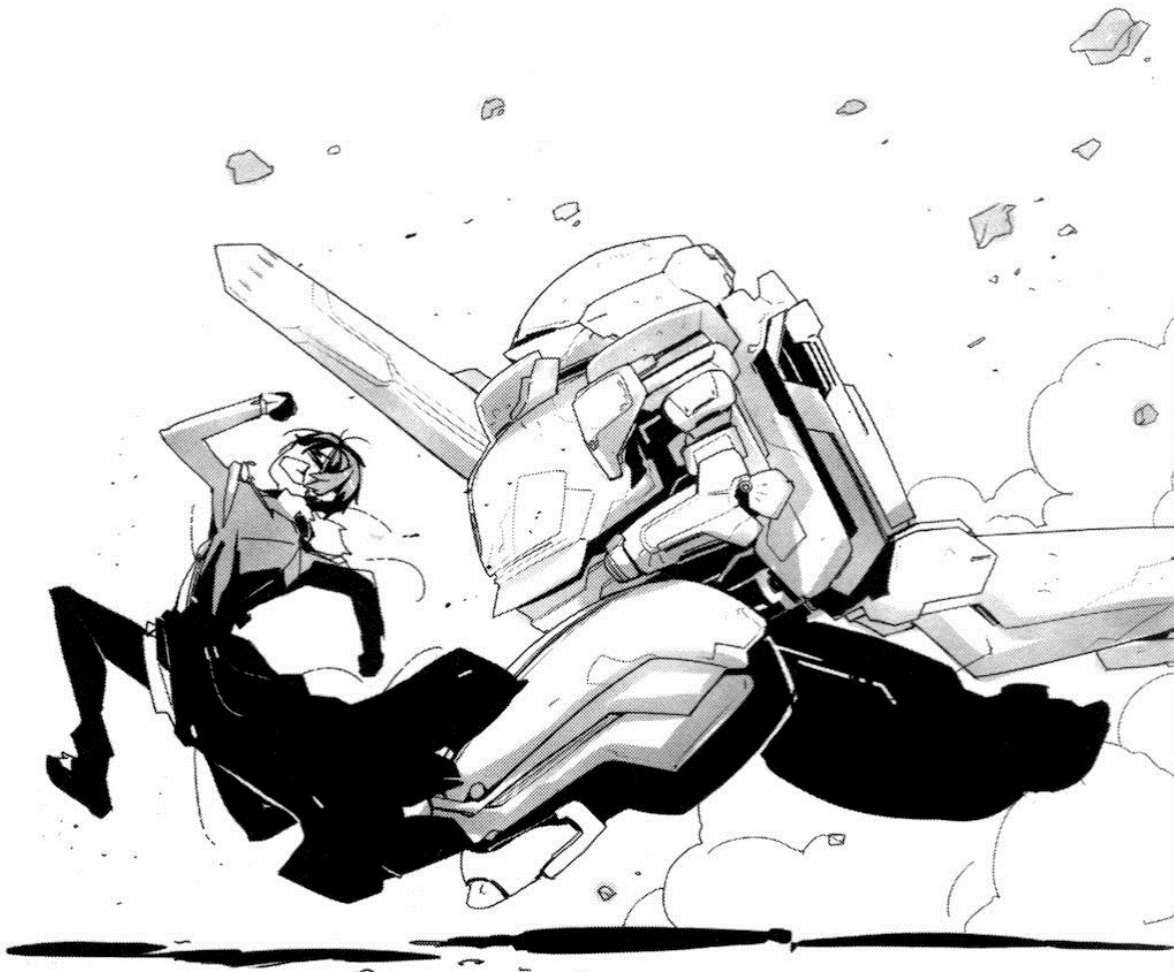
“I am that nation!”

The sun struck the earth.

Chapter 25: Choosers on the Way Home

CHAPTER 25

"Choosers on the Way Home"



What can you rely on
When it truly matters?

Point Allocation (Accumulation)

What can you rely on

When it truly matters?

Point Allocation (Accumulation)

The fall of the sun shook IZUMO.

A ball of light over two hundred meters wide compressed and even bent the ground.

The earth rumbled as something hopped up toward the sky from the edge of the ground. What looked like a collection of giant metallic pillars was the crust frame that formed IZUMO.

Several broken pillars grew from the ground and Exiv kept his light strong in the center of them.

“Splendid.”

With that, he faced forward.

There, people were running along the ruined land while stumbling from the vibrations.

They were the Musashi students.

The enemy had escaped the sun’s strike.

...Not bad.

Exiv thought to himself at the center of the massive field of shimmering heat.

He had assumed the slower enemies had been crushed by the pressure of his light.

“But all of them suddenly accelerated.”

There was only one reason why they were able to do that.

“The Musashi Chancellor’s Blessing supply.”

He could supply around forty people with the ether Blessings needed for spells.

Exiv realized why the chancellor had come to the front line. He was not just there for fun.

...He wanted to see who needed his Blessing supply to provide a more efficient supply in their retreat!

Exiv saw the Musashi Chancellor running at the back of the Musashi group. The boy turned around and pointed both hands at Exiv.

“Hah! Iiiiidiot! Iiiiiidiot! Your special Naked Sun Drop isn’t gonna work on us!!”

“Heh. I am shocked. How did you know my technique’s name?”

The Musashi group fell silent and hung their heads as they ran and a kick hit Exiv in the back of the side. He made a half rotation, rolled along the heated ground, looked up in surprise, and saw his own wife driving one of Three Musketeer Henri’s large swords into the ground.

“Terumoto! Did you come running because you were worried about me!? I’m so happy!”

“I’d be happy too if you didn’t cause so much trouble.”

Meanwhile, the color black arrived.

A second shot from Lype Katathlipse had been fired diagonally down at them.

Horizon held the gunblade of Lype Katathlipse in her right arm and the large shield of Aspida Phylargia in her left arm. Aspida Phylargia currently had Blessings stored inside it.

“The tension and criticism running through the Musashi should have provided a shot’s worth.”

Logismo Oplo could be carried anywhere by an individual and they were powerful. But on the other hand...

“I have determined they are worrying on the fuel consumption side. I can estimate that to be why Aspida Phylargia exists, but I also require a human power outlet like Toori-sama.”

Exiv’s light was still plenty hot, but it was already losing its pressure. Horizon was able to determine that Phos Hyperephania could not be used repeatedly.

Therefore, she attacked.

“Fire!”

However, the Musashi side’s attack did not end there.

“Second throw!!”

Below Horizon, the leading group had arrived within two hundred meters of the Musashi and they suddenly turned around. The group behind them once again created openings in their ranks.

“...!”

A second round of javelins used acceleration spells to fly back as a counterattack. Due to the close range, the throws were nearly horizontal.

Lype Katathlipse and the javelins flew straight toward Exiv, Terumoto, and the Hexagone Française group next to and surpassing them.

Just as everything was about to hit, a single person on the battlefield did something else.

That person was Terumoto.

Even as the black tearing and the javelins flew toward her, she scratched and shook her head.

“What a pain. Stop making me go to so much effort.”

The color black reached her in order to devour her.

However, she did not oppose it. She simply stood in front of Exiv and raised her eyes.

“ ... ”

The instant she directly trained her eyes on the black strike, the long pitch black claws shattered.

All of the tearing ripped, bent, scattered, and vanished in front of her eyes.

It was gone.

Mitotsudaira pointed her sharp gaze here and there, but no change had come over Terumoto, Exiv, or any of those around them.

...Eh?

She knew two things. First, Lype Katathlipse’s power had once more been negated by something. And second...

“That weapon.”

In the telescopic sign frame, Terumoto was holding a sword she had not had before. The black and white sword had a shallow curve and it appeared to be made from polished bones.

White cloth was wrapped around the hilt as a grip, the tip was stabbed into the ground, and her hands were resting on the bottom of the hilt.

“My Logismoi Oplo, Phos Kenodoxia, forms a pair with this idiot’s. As long as I maintain my Kenodoxia, the power protecting me is invincible.”

Terumoto smiled bitterly in the sign frame.

“Pathetic. It gives away that I’ve got nothing below the surface.”

“Even so, it is my pride to have you stand before me and to protect you, Terumoto.”

...So that means...

Mitotsudaira felt the two of them were both a pair and a single whole. If protecting her was his pride, that made his attack power invincible. And the power he used to protect her was also made invincible.

However...

“But that power shatters Mouri Terumoto’s pride. No matter what she does or how she acts, she will always be protected by him in the end.”

Mitotsudaira’s comment was answered by a divine transmission from Kimi. Musashi’s dancer laughed quietly.

“Heh heh. That is why she does not stand out front.”

Yes.

“She can be irritating, but she is an excellent woman. She focuses a little too much on herself, though. She is perfect for receiving Horizon’s sense of vainglory.”

As if agreeing with Kimi, Exiv's words reached Mitotsudaira's ears.

He called Terumoto's name, placed his hands on her shoulders, and opened his mouth.

"Terumoto," he said slowly. "Listen, Terumoto. One day, I will give you a wonderful gift."

That being...

"I will give you a world where you need not show me any Kenodoxia. I will give you a ruler's world where everything was gained because you were there."

Musashi's girls let out cries that could be taken as surprise, jeering, or envy. With a bit of that same atmosphere in her heart, Mitotsudaira had a thought.

...Those two are somewhat like my king and Horizon.

She was not referring to the individual people. She referred to their positions in relation to each other.

With the word "parallel" in mind, she turned to Horizon.

Horizon was staring down Lype Katathlipse's barrel.

"H-Horizon! What if it goes off by accident!?"

"Judge. Not to worry, Mitotsudaira-sama. I have already used up all of the ether fuel. See?"

After Horizon aimed in a random direction and pulled the trigger, the weapon fired.

The shot sounded like a scream as it left claw marks along a five meter area of the floor.

A while after the black line vanished, Horizon brought a hand to her chin and nodded deeply.

“Just as I thought. That was a close one.”

“Ehhhh!? Is this a game where I lose if I question it!? ...Ah! Tomo, why are you tiptoeing away!? Wait! Wait!!”

Horizon placed a hand on Mitotsudaira’s shoulder, robbing her of her chance to escape.

“Now then, Mitotsudaira-sama. ...Oh, this is the yakiniku meal I made earlier. The shop owner taught me how to make it, so you can find it at the Blue Thunder too.”

“That place really has a chaotic menu for a supposed bakery and snack shop. ...Anyway, wh-what is this about?”

“Judge.” Horizon nodded, held up Lype Katathlipse, and tilted her head. “This thing isn’t much use, don’t you agree?”

...H-how am I supposed to reply to that!?

Tachibana Husband: “It is excellent for suppressing an enemy force spread out over an area. That’s right. I believe you are simply choosing poor opponents.”

Me: “Shige, you idiot! This isn’t the time for serious answers! You’re supposed to trick Seijun into creating a bad joke paradise that annihilates enemy and ally alike!!”

Tachibana Husband: “Oh, I see. That’s Musashi for you. No normal nation would think of a bizarre tactic like that.”

Vice President: “You↑↑ are going to regret this once you get back!!”

Flat Vassal: “Can you please focus on running!?”

The Musashi group was already one hundred and fifty meters away from the central bridge to the Musashi, but Hexagone Française’s heavily-equipped gods of war had started to move. With this timing, the gods of war would catch up once about half of the Musashi group had made it aboard.

Vice President: “Satomi Chancellor! President! Can you send your gods of war out front!?”

Yatsufusa: “Hexagone Française has stopped their shelling, so unfortunately, we have lost our justification for joining the fight.”

That was exactly right.

With the shelling stopped, the trade ship could not be damaged by it and the Satomi and Houjou members could no longer fight in the name of stopping that damage.

Also, a new light had appeared on the enemy’s side.

“Sorry, but you’ll be going along with my Kenodoxia whether you like it or not.”

In the sign frame, wings grew from Terumoto’s back.

A disk-shaped flight device was spatially ejected behind Terumoto’s waist. The disk split in two, six bluish-white wings of light appeared on either side from the space between, and they blossomed like a flower.

“See through it all, Corpus Prudentia – Novum.”

She explained the power it produced.

“Both vainglory and pride are meaningless before Prudentia. Everyone who opposes me must announce each of their actions as something they can accomplish.”

Just after Terumoto's announcement, a sound much like a bell washed over the air along with a cool wind.

“...!?”

The Musashi warriors running toward the central bridge stumbled in unison.

They tripped. There were several hundred of them, but all of their legs stopped moving without eliminating their momentum.

“_____!?”

Unable to even speak, they were trapped by their falling motion.

Neshinbara thought to himself in the command center on Musashino's bow.

...What just happened!?

He tried to speak, but his mouth would not move. He tried to operate his sign frame, but his hands would not move. He could do nothing more than think and yet Kimi spoke next to him.

“I'm going to file my nails a little.”

She pulled nail file from her skirt, placed it against her nails, and looked at Neshinbara as if she had not noticed anything.

“Hm? Just out of curiosity, why are you so stiff? Are you stupid?”

He caught on as soon as she asked, so he mentally ordered his mouth to open.

“I speak! This Testamenta Arma puts a restriction on our movements! No matter what we try to do, we have to say it's within our ability before it will work! This is...”

They had to announce what they would do and anything beyond their ability was rejected.

Neshinbara spoke on the meaning of that power.

“I speak! This is a defensive Testamenta Arma that does not allow any falsehoods and strips us bare by revealing our true ability!”

A single voice rose from the falling group.

“I run!!”

The voice was Adele’s. She spoke through the external speakers of her vassal’s mobile shell and her voice reached the others.

It got through to some immediately and others only spoke after falling to hands and knees.

“I run...”

They muttered the words as if testing them out.

“I run.”

“I inhale.”

“I place my hands on the ground.”

“I get up.”

“I face forward.”

“I run!!”

They cried out and ran.

Once they spoke, they could run, so...

“I run!”

They said it again for confirmation and they all began to run.

However, their speed had dropped. Their acceleration spells and the like “exceeded their own ability”, so their effects had been negated.

Their legs grew heavy as if from exhaustion, but they still ran.

Their goal was not far ahead. They could see the Musashi and the central bridge leading to Tama.

A little over four minutes remained until 3:15, so the secretary had prepared himself for some damage and decided they should board the Musashi and endure the attack from there. So returning and boarding the ship was their only option.

“I show my worry. ...They’re catching up!”

The heavily-equipped gods of war were approaching from behind. The gods of war were close enough to catch up while the Musashi group was still boarding.

While the running group wondered what to do, they noticed someone standing on the front of the bridge.

It was an ally.

This was the Musashi fighter with the greatest defensive power. She was Musashi Vice Chancellor Honda Futayo.

All of them noticed her.

“I cheer! ...All right!”

“I agree! ...We’re saved!”

Relief filled their hearts as they looked at Futayo who stood facing them.

The girl was frozen in place due to the Testamenta Arma.

Futayo did not understand the Testamenta Arma's rules and could not move.

The Musashi group soon realized she would be of no use.

"I-I gasp! Fnh! And um...I-I give a tsukkomi!?"

" 'I despair!' comes first, doesn't it!? ...We're screwed!!"

The cheers transformed to wails.

"I ask!? Can we use our acceleration spells!?"

"I deny! No! It goes against Prudentia to put that kind of burden on your body!"

The wails grew louder.

"I complain! I-I'm really slow!!"

"I nod! And I will agree! I'm not too fast myself!"

"I face reality! ...Dammit!! I can't distract myself by thinking how cool I look when I'm desperate!!"

Sure enough, everyone's speed was dropping even further.

"I give my opinion. ...Yeah, that's bound to happen."

Kimi spoke quietly while peering intently into the sign frame.

"I ask. ...One's 'true ability' can be defined in a number of different ways, but what is it in this person's case?"

Mal-Ga: "I answer. In our case, the late nights and doping used to complete our works are an 'unreasonable burden' that we can't keep up every day. Basically, the spells are viewed as 'imprudent actions'."

Queen: “Now, then. It would seem there is an imprudent person among us.”

Cecil: “Do drugs taste good?”

Drug Poet: “Hey, you! My drugs are not an unreasonable burden! To me, it is no different than breathing. The color of blood is the same as the color of a health drink. I seriously hope you can understand this!”

Almost Everyone: “You aren’t even close to being prudent!”

Kimi glared at Neshinbara as if to say “now then”.

“I’ll describe the situation, okay? The urgent situation requires that they put an unreasonable burden on their bodies and run, but void of context, the action itself is imprudent. It looks like they can’t run any faster than a light jog for exercise.”

So...

“So I ask. ...What should we do, four eyes? You’re our strategist, aren’t you?”

Neshinbara could not even say “judge” to agree.

However, he did speak without turning toward Kimi.

“I answer. ...There is a way. But Aoi Sister-kun, you can resent me for this a little. Of course, I’m sure you only provoked me because you know what I’m going to do.”

Then again...

“This situation only leaves us with the one method.”

Musashi's warriors hurried, but their desire to move even further forward refused to leave their hearts.

"I cry! ...Why are we moving at a jogging pace!? It was humiliating enough to have the treasurer pass us with his dashing prostration during our running training on the Musashi, but this is even worse!!"

"I get mad! I never run this slowly!!"

"I give a quick comment. I want to get back and sleep!!"

Just as everyone said "I wholeheartedly agree!", some people suddenly pulled out ahead. They were the warriors running on the front line. However, even those who had quickly accelerated and moved forward cried out in surprise.

"I ask. Wh-what is this?"

"I look back."

"I check."

Those behind them had caught up, also by accelerating.

"...!? I ask! Why can we use our acceleration spells!?"

However, the reason quickly became clear. Those in the back had cast acceleration spells on those in the front and the cycle repeated from the very front row to the very back row.

"I get it!"

The group in front spoke after unknowingly receiving an acceleration spell.

"Casting a spell on someone else works because it doesn't put a burden on the caster!"

“Oh? They’re actually pretty prudent.”

Terumoto watched the Hexagone Française warriors race past her and Exiv and she turned toward Henri who stood next to her.

“And yet it took all of you a pretty long time to catch on.”

Henri frowned.

“*Belle de Marionnettes* have excellent individual problem solving ability, but it is not easy for us to consider supporting others in our group like that.”

“That’s right,” replied Armand who stood on the other side.

He had gathered the cores of his troops using gravitational control and he was lining them up inside a wicker basket another *Belle de Marionnette* had brought over.

“Okay, make sure to repair all of them.”

After leaving that *Belle de Marionnettes* in charge, he turned toward the Musashi forces that were accelerating a row at a time.

They were growing more distant and Armand muttered “not bad” when he saw it.

“So they have realized what the princess’s Kenodoxia means. ...They’re putting up a good fight here. But either way, they’re going to have to make a difficult decision. They will soon have to make a simple subtraction.”

“Testament,” agreed Exiv. “They should soon realize they will be forced to make a great sacrifice. And... Henri, it is about time to contact the Palais-Cardinal and our capricious vice chancellor. Tell them to begin with the real reason for all of this. ...And have the gunners prepare as well.”

He spoke.

“Now, the subtraction is complete.”

Some of the Musashi group had finished crossing the bridge to the Musashi.

“I turn around.”

“I call out. Hurry up!”

They had definitely pulled away from the enemy. They had arrived at the Musashi before Hexagone Française’s heavily-equipped gods of war caught up. Once they holed up inside the ship, they only had to endure for around four minutes.

However...

“I...ask.”

Once they turned around, they all noticed a certain fact.

“Isn’t that...really bad!?”

The final row of Musashi’s warriors remained behind them. Because they were the last row, there was no one behind them to cast acceleration spells on them.

That was why that final row began casting spells on the people to their right and left.

But...

“I ask. ...Isn’t that last row the group that was almost hit by the Hexagone Française Chancellor’s Naked Sun Drop?”

“I agree. Judge. And I continue speaking. Yes, they’re the ones who fought on the front line and used up both their spell charms and the Blessings for their standard divine protection. That’s why our clothed nudist used his distribution spell to give them Blessings for their divine protection acceleration spells when they were about to be crushed.”

Even after being worn down so much, they were using acceleration spells yet again.

So where were the Blessings to power those spells coming from?

As if to reveal the answer, that last row accelerated.

While they moved forward, two people remained behind.

One was Toori who continued to provide Blessings via his distribution spell. The other was Adele who ran alongside him to protect him.

“...!?”

Everyone knew why.

Adele had no acceleration spells because of the limitations of the mobile shell.

And Toori had remained behind to constantly provide the Blessings the final row needed for their standard divine protection acceleration spells. That prevented him from receiving an acceleration spell from anyone else.

It was a simple calculation. If there was anyone who could not share acceleration spells with someone else, they would remain behind.

This was the result of choosing the greatest number of survivors.

“I get angry.”

Everyone gasped.

They were close enough for any of the others to cover the distance in no time at all, but it was a long way for Mr. Impossible and the heavy vassal's mobile shell. And so all the others could only watch their distance chancellor.

“I guess I'll lament. ...I never thought he'd end up dying like this.”

“I guess I’ll nod. ... Yeah, he wasn’t a bad guy. He was pretty troublesome, though.”

“I guess I’ll agree. ... We’ll tell stories about you tonight. We’ve got more than enough bad memories for that.”

“I-I shout, dammit! C-c’mon, you guys! Don’t kill me off already!!”

“Then we ask!”

They all shouted back at him.

“What are you going to do!?”

“I-I apologize! I’m sorry! I’m sorry, chancellor!!”

Adele bowed again and again inside her mobile shell. She did her best to circle behind the chancellor to defend against any enemy attacks, but he sighed and spoke.

“I speak. ... Don’t worry about it. Also, I won’t have to hand out anything more for the time being.”

The last row had finished crossing the bridge far ahead.

Adele was relieved they were safe, but...

“I apologize, chancellor. I’m sorry about talking about you like your very existence was a problem, talking about you like you’re contagious, or talking about you like you aren’t one of us. I said too much and if you die here, I know I’ll regret all of that.”

“I-I’m gonna lecture you, dammit! But, well, you’ll protect me right?”

“I comply.”

The mobile shell lowered a little as a nod.

“I comply.

“I nod and I speak. ...Don’t worry about it, Adele.”

The idiot smiled toward her.

“I may be an idiot who can’t do anything, but none of the others are.”

So...

“I’m counting on you, Horizon!!”

Horizon understood the meaning of what had happened earlier.

...I see.

“I speak. ...The surprising accidental discharge I experienced with Mitotsudaira-sama was caused by Toori-sama supplying me with Blessings, wasn’t it?”

Even as he had gone to the front line to determine who was in the most need and accurately provided them with Blessings, he had been constantly worrying about her.

...I have determined he is very difficult to understand.

And now he was telling her to use that power to sweep away the enemies approaching him from behind.

It was almost as if...

...Is he telling me to protect him with the thought he left with me?

She concluded that she did not understand and raised Lype Katathlipse.

“I aim. First, I will fire a low power test shot to check my aim.”

She aimed and fired. A moment later, a sign frame appeared next to her face.

“I object! I object, Horizon! That grazed my hair! Are you trying to kill me!?”

“Just to be clear, that was for the surprise accidental discharge.”

“I guess I’ll speak, but did it really surprise you that much!?”

“I will say ‘judge’. If it had surprised me any further, I would have aimed for the face. Anyway, that gave me a sense of the distance, so...”

Horizon aimed Lype Katathlipse toward the heavily-equipped gods of war and the Hexagone Française warriors pursuing the idiot and the vassal.

“I pronounce. It is only at 15% power, but I will fire.”

A black blast was fired. Because of the initial shot near Toori, the pursuing Hexagone Française warriors predicted its path.

“Escape to the left and right!!”

“Testament.”

As soon as the pursuing warriors parted, the black tearing shot down the center. It was a weak and small-scale blast, but no one could break through it.

The enemy had been split down the center, but their great numbers prevented them from immediately returning. To avoid those on the inside, the outer edges spread out even further.

However, the gods of war were a different story. They had been travelling on the outer edges and spread out to the left and right accordingly, but one approaching from behind the others rushed through the area Lype Katathlipse’s blast had travelled through.

The long strides of its pursuit quickly approached Adele and Toori.

However, another movement was added in.

“I join the battle.”

With those words, someone lowered down in front of the bridge.

“I name myself! I, Musashi Vice Chancellor Honda Futayo, have shown my cleverness by finally figuring this out...so I will join the battle!!”

The female warrior was quick even at her normal speed and she ran with Tonbokiri in hand.

Futayo ran toward the battlefield.

...Basically, I have to say everything out loud without thinking too much about it.

In that case, she thought while opening her mouth.

“I move forward.”

She started forward.

“I accelerate.”

She accelerated.

“I maintain my speed.”

She maintained it and understood.

“I thought I could do this.”

And so she continued on, speaking all the while.

“I run.”

“I dash.”

“I rush.”

“I arrive.”

“I rush and arrive.”

“I reach them.” “I greet them. Adele-dono, you should hurry. You to the side, do whatever.”

“I speak. Oh, c’mon!”

“I ignore him.”

“I pass by them.” “And I continue on.” “I point out that the ‘on’ was unnecessary.”

“I face forward.” “I jump right.” “I observe. I do not let the descending sword distract me.” “I lower down.” “I leap...no, I run toward the large sword.” “I rush my legs along the rising sword.”

“I leap.”

“I place my feet atop the sword rising into the air.”

“I run.” “I run onward. I race along the blade.”

“I detect the initial movement of the god of war’s shoulder.” “I realize how it will move.” “I jump to reach the enemy’s moving forearm.” “I do not hesitate to thrust myself forward.” “I catch up to the pulling motion.” “I place my feet on it.” “I stand upon the arm that is pulled back in preparation.” “I endure.” “I detect the motion of the arm I stand on.”

“I predict its future movement.” “I run.”

“I run along the god of war’s arm.” “I reach the top.” “I see the enemy’s eyes.” “I can see them.”

“Bind, Tonbokiri.”

“Understood.”

One heavily-equipped god of war fell backwards as a diagonal line of damage cut across its chest.

Yoshiyasu watched Futayo through Righteousness’s visual devices.

...She can do that with only her normal movements!?

It also helped that Futayo’s acceleration spell used purification and therefore did not apply a burden to her body. However, her basic movements and decision-making speed had to have dropped quite a bit.

...And it took her less time than before to defeat the god of war.

“Did you see that, Yoshiyasu?”

A voice reached her from Yatsufusa which had fallen back to the Musashi just like her.

“She saw through all of its movements. She understands just how far the god of war’s arms and legs can move, where its armor creates blind spots, and the trick to Hexagone Française god of war sword fighting. She must have learned all that while fighting the eight gods of war earlier. And the heavy equipment on this one weighs down its movements and provides more space to stand on. That’s why she defeated it so much faster than the previous eight.”

Futayo leaped from the collapsing god of war. Her ponytail trailed behind her through the air and she faced the enemy group approaching the Musashi Chancellor from the north. That group would indeed arrive first and it was obvious why.

...The Sanada ninja are still to the south.

The ninja were not moving and they simply faced their enemy, but their previous results and Futayo’s current actions prevented the southern force from carelessly

attacking. The enemy line split to the south had no choice but to return to the center, but...

“...!”

A tremor filled the ground as the god of war Futayo had defeated collapsed in the center.

“Yoshiyasu.”

“Don’t say it. I already get it. ...When she stood on the god of war’s shoulder, she grasped the surrounding situation and made sure it would fall in the center as an obstacle. That’s what you want to say, isn’t it?”

“No, I was telling you not to get too caught up in watching.”

“Kh.”

She glared over at him and Yatsufusa had its back turned and its shoulders were shaking. Gods of war created an artificial reproduction of breathing, but it seemed they did so based on the pilot’s feelings as well.

And so Yoshiyasu averted her gaze.

“Hmph.”

She looked away and down toward Honda Futayo.

“I charge!” shouted the girl.

“I attack,” repeated her spear.

She ran with her spear to diagonally tear into the back end of the enemies and god of war moving north.

She’s insane, thought Yoshiyasu. *Can she really rescue the Musashi Chancellor?*

Suddenly, the Hexagone Française battle line heading north exploded.

“What!?”

Futayo watched the god of war running north.

However, the explosion of the warriors beyond was also in her field of vision.

They were directly torn into and launched upwards as if something had burst from directly below them. The line of Hexagone Française warriors was lifted into the air much like a spear driven into the bottom of a snake from the side.

...What was that!?

“I question.”

The warriors charging toward her suddenly flew into the air and scattered with a wavelike motion.

It made no sense, but Futayo had a sudden thought.

...Tactics change with the times.

Therefore...

...Don't tell me...

“I grumble. ...Don't tell me that explosive destruction is a new Hexagone Française tactic!!”

Silver Wolf: “I'll be blunt, but I really think they were just blown away.”

So that wasn't it? she wondered while deciding not to worry about the explosive destruction. They must be into that kind of thing. I suppose that is another kind of illness people can have.

That settled it for her. The real issue at hand was the god of war charging toward her, so she focused on it.

“I lower my stance.”

Her stance changed accordingly, but she heard another voice before she could accelerate. It was a deep male voice.

“Lily Flower!!”

As if responding to the resounding words, the god of war exploded in front of Futayo.

It was smashed to pieces.

...What!?

Futayo’s eyes opened wide.

“I show my surprise. Don’t tell me this god of war’s self-destruction is a new Hexagone Française tactic!”

As Futayo cried out, the god of war fell forward. She could see cracks spreading through all of its armor, its outer shell, and the moving parts beneath and it soon broke apart along those cracks.

It collapsed to its knees.

“...!”

And it split open. The safety had ejected the pilot, but the combination mechanism had already broken. The pilot’s right arm had not made it in time, so that arm was covered in blood as he fell from the machine’s back.

Next, the airborne warriors reached their apex and began to fall.

Their overlapping trajectories turned downwards.

And as they started toward the ground, Futayo spotted the enemy.

A P.A. Oda man stood below the god of war with his feet planted far apart. He had black hair and sunglasses. He used a comb and the other hand to brush his hair and his eyes turned to the idiot behind her.

“Found you, Musashi Chancellor!”

Futayo asked a question while the god of war fell to its knees between them.

“I ask!”

She asked.

“Who are you?”

“You’re just gonna ignore my answer!!”

He stuck the comb in his vest pocket just as the god of war’s knees struck the ground. A beat later, the machine’s motors and joints were destroyed, but the Hexagone Française warriors still rushed toward him.

To Futayo, the man looked almost calm even as the Hexagone Française warriors attacked from every single direction around him.

“Like hell you’re getting away with that!!”

Around a dozen people attacked at once, but Asama saw something else from Tama’s outer edge.

...That light.

It was ether light.

Several men had surrounded Narimasa and thrust their weapons toward him, but ether light leaked out from between them. Asama recognized that specific ether light.

...Wh-what am I supposed to say for this? U-um...

Due to the restriction on her actions, she had to announce it up front.

“I-I will explain!”

Mitotsudaira turned toward her with a surprised look after announcing she would.

“I ask. D-do you know what this is, Tomo?”

“I am surprised. ...Heh heh heh. You certainly are well-informed, Asama.”

Shut up, she thought while opening a sign frame and displaying an image.

Novice: “I will give you some advice, Asama-kun! Raise your index finger like this! Like this! And then say ‘Allow me to explain!’ ”

“I’ll ignore that.”

At any rate, she had something she had to say.

“I will tell all of you! That light is the same as Maeda Toshiie’s Israfil!”

As soon as she said that, the light grew and the full silhouettes of all of the men attacking Narimasa could be seen in it. There were fifteen men in all and many of them had blunt striking weapons instead of swords.

However, Narimasa stopped them all.

He defended with various parts of his body: his raised arms, his back, his stomach, his thighs, etc.

The weapons struck him, but he gently raised his arms as if nothing had happened.

Asama saw wing-shaped tattoos on his right and left arms. The tattoos emitted bright light and definite wings appeared on the surface.

...Those really are the same as the Israfil wings we saw in England!

Next, the light formed further objects. Overlapping flowers appeared across his arms, his legs, and other parts of his body. They were all lily emblems.

“Blossom, Lily Flower!”

He trembled so hard he almost seemed to jump, he raised his arms, and all fifteen people surrounding him were blown away.

They flew through the air, rotated, and floated up. Next, Narimasa left that scene overhead as he began to move.

“Let’s go!”

He blew away the still-recognizable wreckage of the destroyed god of war and leaped forward.

His path took him directly toward Toori and Adele.

Oh, no, thought Asama, but...

...*Ah*.

She relaxed when she noticed someone else there.

Futayo had begun to race forward as if planning to collide with Narimasa.

Silver Wolf: “I speak! Futayo! That is Sassa Narimasa!! He is the commander who controls the fourth of P.A. Oda’s Six Heavenly Demon Armies along with Maeda Toshiie who we met in England! You remember that, right!?”

Mitotsudaira-dono certainly is kind! thought Futayo while thanking her from the bottom of her heart.

“I move forward.” “I raise my weapon.” “I thrust it forward.”

“I strike,” added Tonbokiri as its tip shot forward.

Fragments of the god of war were blasted away by the pressure as the weapon moved toward Narimasa.

He was unarmed. He simply raised his right hand and moved forward in a compact manner.

...He's fast!?

He had only taken a single step, but that step had brought him past the god of war and to her. The leap measured twenty meters.

By the time Futayo recalled Yoshitsune's Hassou Tobi, Narimasa's strike had reached her.

"I'll knock you back!"

Futayo responded to those words by jabbing Tonbokiri straight forward.

Just before they collided, she saw something.

An emblem of light had appeared on the pivot leg kept behind Narimasa.

...A lily emblem!?

That was not the only one.

The emblems of light blossomed one after another, moving from his knee to his waist, stomach, right shoulder, right elbow, and wrist.

It almost looked like a flower extending its stalk to bloom in a higher place.

Finally, the glowing flower bloomed along his hand.

"Lily Flower!"

The leg Narimasa brought forward sank deep down and IZUMO shook.

"...!?"

The altitude of IZUMO's south side clearly lowered by about twenty centimeters.

...So it was a powerful stomp!

Before Futayo came to that realization, all of Narimasa's lily emblems glowed brightly. The blossoming flowers raced from his foot to his hand.

"Shine, Lily Flower!"

She realized an attack was coming but also realized she could not evade.

"Clear it up! Tonbokiri!"

She sent the spear tip directly into the oncoming power.

She tried to pierce the tip of his jabbing hand with the tip of her own power. She perfectly and calmly read his movements and sent in a counterattack.

"I will make it so."

Despite Tonbokiri's displayed announcement, the weapon was crushed.

The blade and base were unharmed, but the shaft did not survive.

It was completely smashed.

With the sound of shattering metal, pieces of the three meter metal shaft scattered in every direction.

The primary segment of the weapon was deflected into the air.

The weapon had been destroyed.

Futayo had poured all her strength into the spear's shaft, so she lost her balance. She primarily chained attacks together, so this sudden change in her center of gravity caused her to stumble forward.

“_____”

She had been right to lower her head. Narimasa's barehanded jab shot by above it.

She wore a horn-shaped defensive field generator that both bound her ponytail and provided her spell defense.

“...”

An instant later, Narimasa's strike smashed the right horn, but it seemed the shaft's destruction had caught Narimasa by surprise as well. He was unable to fully eliminate the recoil from the powerful stomp he had used to attack her.

“Tch!”

He clicked his tongue and flipped a dozen meters to the side.

Futayo cried out while grabbing Tonbokiri's primary section as it rotated through the air.

“I warn! Adele-dono!”

Oh, no, thought Futayo.

After all, Narimasa's leap had brought him past Adele and the idiot but still quite near them.

Once he landed, he turned around and took action. He almost slid his body while turning and leaped toward Adele and the idiot.

He had decided to target the idiot instead of continuing to fight Futayo.

Futayo's eyebrows rose at his quick movement and decision-making.

...Well done!

She was impressed he had managed to see the idiot as more than a meaningless existence.

Once he landed again, Narimasa faced the idiot and moved forward.

“...!”

Another powerful stomp knocked IZUMO down before it shot back up.

The ground rumbled and a piece of it split open.

Narimasa then made a twisting jab at the idiot that almost looked like a backhand blow.

The attack whistled through the air as it raced toward the boy.

Adele made up her own mind.

No one had ordered her to act, but her body moved on reflex.

“I protect!!”

She predicted Narimasa’s attack and placed her mobile shell in his way.

She knew how powerful the enemy’s attacks were, but she had no choice but to defend here. After all, there was a reason the chancellor was so far behind the others and his decision had been in part based on his trust in her presence there.

So...

“I will protect him!”

She charged forward.

She could see the enemy's strike. It was a barehanded jab. It was fast, but as a human motion, his joints could only move so far and his reach was only so long.

...This is only an extension of human motion!

In the instant of impact, she would pull back to absorb as much of the shock as possible. All of the mobile shell's moving parts and buffering would help soften the blow. And so she worked to deflect the attack, just as she had been trained.

“Kh!”

It was a direct hit to the chest.

I did it, she thought. If it hit, that means I protected him.

Or so it should have been.

“...!?”

The chest armor and the connected head armor broke.

It all shattered.

...Adele!!

Asama could not even speak as she watched on.

Adele's mobile shell split open. At the very least, it looked that way from above.

The chest could simply be called “smashed”, but the head was another story entirely. As it had already been attacked by Henri, the upper center had split in two, exposing Adele's head and body.

...This isn't good!

Asama's eyes briefly met Adele's dazed ones. Adele did not seem to notice her, but a moment later, her glasses shot into the air and she followed.

“...!!”

The vassal's mobile shell flew over one hundred meters.

The only thing she could hit was the ground, but with her head exposed, she would not escape unharmed if the mobile shell rolled.

Asama tried to shout for someone to help, but three things were already happening below.

First, the blue and white half-dragon named Urquiaga flew over and spread out his body to catch the mobile shell.

Second, Futayo clashed with Narimasa, wielding only the unharmed base of Tonbokiri.

And third...

...Toori-kun!

Toori had finally reached the end of the central bridge.

Those who had already crossed the bridge let out a unified shout.

“We will cover for you!!”

They raised their weapons to cover for the idiot. They could see the idiot through gun sights or past their bows and one of them slowly spoke.

“I'll speak a thought I just had, but what if we hit him?”

“I audibly gulp!”

“I protest. ...P-please don't say anything so ominous! It'll make me want to target him! Don't do it! Just don't!”

“I'll speak too! Aren't all of you just awful!?” shouted the idiot.

However, he seemed worried about Adele.

“ ... ”

Just as he moved a foot onto the bridge, everything shook. For just an instant, the ground shook up and down even more than from Narimasa's stomps.

“ ...!?”

The instantaneous shaking was so great that it almost seemed IZUMO had broken in two.

This time, the epicenter was not Narimasa. He was busy facing down and glaring at Futayo.

The shaking came from the southern woods.

It sounded like smashing rock and the land shook vertically as if the bottom had fallen out.

However, IZUMO's frame broke down the land into blocks, so an earthquake in one section could not shake the entire island. Nevertheless, when the shaking returned, the entire southern area lowered as if kneeling.

“ ...!?”

The supposedly impossible shaking left people unsteady on their feet, knocked them to the ground, and even tripped the gods of war.

The Musashi's eastern land port bent quite a bit.

The shaking and bending could be absorbed when it transferred between crust blocks, but the island could not react immediately. The movement speed of the crust blocks was set low, so a portion of it became completely stuck.

“IZUMO to Musashi!”

IZUMO's controllers gave an outdoor broadcast.

“Sections 12, 11, and 9 of the Musashi dock's southeast eight sections have run aground!! They cannot move! We fear the bottom has been damaged, so we need to release the fixed points! Open all of your gantry cranes!”

And...

“We must request that the Musashi began an emergency ascent! Over!”

An alarm blared.

Workers primarily made up of IZUMO automatons ran along the land port's dock.

Meanwhile, flowers bloomed on the Musashi.

On the academy bridge, “Musashi” sprinkled water over the ether flower bed that represented the eight ships.

“Judge. We will comply with the request. Far Eastern Linked Quasi-Bahamut Class Aerial City Ship Musashi is shifting to emergency departure mode. All who are standing, please hold onto a nearby railing. All who are crawling on the floor, do as you please. Over.”

But then “Musashi” saw something else.

The bridge Toori was trying to cross fell away.

The shaking had formed a vertical gap between the ground and the Musashi, so the bridge began to fall into that ravine where it would soon be swallowed up.

“I will support it! Over.”

Musashi used gravity barriers to support the falling bridge from below. Gravity barriers could only be opened for an instant, so she continually opened new ones to support the weight.

“I cannot keep this up for-...”

Sakai asked her a question while drinking tea behind her.

“Need some help, ‘Musashi’-san?”

“I can keep this up for a long time, so that is not necessary!”

She held her left hand over the port side of the flower bed and spoke in a dignified tone.

“Over!!”

The bridge was supported by continually appearing and scattering panels of light, so Toori ran.

At the same time, mist appeared around the Musashi up to the waterline. To allow the ship to float, the surface armor contained ether engines called Susashizunami and they were creating the sea the Musashi floated on.

The mist covered the bottom of the ship and spread out toward IZUMO.

The shellfire continued, but Toori vanished inside the mist.

Nevertheless, they could still hear his footsteps as he attempted to reach the loading entrance where they all waited.

Neshinbara received a report from Tama’s captain automaton, “Tama”, saying Toori had reached the bridge. With two additional facts, he was able to make a guess at something else.

The first additional fact was that the restriction of the Testamenta Arma had vanished.

...When did that happen!?

While questioning himself, he found his hands could move more freely. As for the other additional fact...

“Hexagone Française has stopped their charge?”

Mist covered the land of eastern IZUMO and the sounds of the enemy charge had vanished.

In that mist, the heavily-equipped gods of war remained motionless at a safe distance from the Musashi and no invading footsteps could be heard.

...What is going on?

Neshinbara found this odd. If they had stopped their charge and the Testamenta Arma was no longer in effect...

“Then what is this shaking coming from the southeast!?”

He looked into the southern sky. He turned his head, then his body, and finally casually struck a pose.

...Oh, I could use this scene in my novel.

That was when he noticed the giant mass of metal up in the sky.

It was large enough to obscure the sun, so it was more than just a “mass”. It almost looked like the metal crust itself, it appeared to measure around eighty meters long, and it resembled a bone.

“Is that the main frame of IZUMO’s crust!?”

Neshinbara saw something that should not have been.

...I feel like I've been seeing that kind of thing a lot lately!!

However, that airborne eighty meter frame was most definitely there.

One end had a jagged edge that he could only imagine had been twisted and broken off.

Someone had forcibly torn it away from the rest of the frame.

It made sense if he assumed that was what had caused the previous shaking.

However...

“Wh-who could possibly tear off and throw something like that!?”

Its trajectory and speed were those of a light underarm throw.

It dropped toward them from the sky like a fruit someone had tossed their way.

It fell while wrapped in a short but heavy sound of wind.

However, Neshinbara suddenly wondered who had torn off and thrown the giant frame.

...It couldn't be...

He then realized what had been missing from the battlefield the entire time.

“This was Hexagone Française Vice Chancellor...Turenne!!”

He finally realized why Hexagone Française had stopped their charge and everything else.

...If it was all meant to highlight Vice Chancellor's Turenne's debut, it all makes sense.

He looked back up at the great mass of metal approaching from overhead.

“Was this Turenne’s doing!?”

As he spoke, the metal fell.

The fall of a great mass was no different from a great impact.

But the falling mass of metal did not hit the Musashi. It fell just off of Tama’s starboard side.

“That’s the land side of the bridge!!”

The automatons were slow to react because it was not a direct attack on the Musashi.

“Musashi” was supporting the bridge, but its connection had been set to “emergency purge”. It was being treated as “not there”, so they had been even slower to react as the great mass of metal fell on it.

The giant torn-off piece of frame fell on the IZUMO side of Tama’s starboard bridge.

Rather than having a large object falling on it, that misty part of IZUMO was more or less hit with a massive impact.

The metal crashed down.

Not even the continually opening gravity barriers could support the momentum of its fall.

The light was smashed, the mass fell, and “Musashi” had already had her hands full supporting only the bridge.

“————! Over.”

The mass of metal fell on the edge of the land port that the bridge sat on. In the mist, a reinforced stone wall crumbled along with the bridge.

This all happened just as Toori was about to finish crossing it.

Next, the bridge jumped up.

Because the mass of metal tore into the land end, the Musashi end was lifted up.

The bridge had been placed diagonally down to IZUMO, so this strike to the lower IZUMO end caused it to draw an arc and begin to stand straight up.

It rotated with Toori still on it and everyone watched its rotation. It began slow but quickly picked up speed.

“...!?”

The land end bent like a sugar sculpture as it was knocked downwards and the Musashi end shot upwards.

“Ah! Hey, wait!”

Toori frantically tried to run up the bridge, but it was too late. The bridge had already moved past vertical, so he could only try to cling to it.

“Nwaaaaaah!”

Everyone on the Musashi could only see the bottom of the bridge and it soon tilted toward the land side.

They could not stop it and they could hear the idiot struggling on the other side.

“Nwah! D-dammit! Okay, everyone, it looks like it’s time to say goodbye for to- ... At least let me finish!!”

Just as the idiot was thrown toward the misty land, shells began to hit the Musashi’s side once more.

Chapter 26: Searcher in the Mist

CHAPTER 26

"Searcher in the Mist"



Um

Where are you?

Point Allocation (ULTRAEASY)

Um

Where are you?

Point Allocation (Ultra Easy)

Inside the mist, Futayo saw the idiot fly in a parabolic arc leading to the ground covered by that same mist.

He was approximately one hundred meters away.

She was worried about Adele too, but the half-dragon had caught her.

...So I must retrieve-...

Before she could think “him”, a swift strike came at her from the right.

...Sassa Narimasa!?

The mist split open and that was exactly who arrived.

She did not hesitate to thrust Tonbokiri toward the leading edge of the enemy's speed.

Her opponent was here, so she spoke while beginning her confrontation with Narimasa.

“Sanada! Go retrieve the idiot over there!”

Futayo's call reached the Sanada force in the mist, but they did not move.

“Hey, Anayama. Aren't we going?” asked Kakei Juuzou with his hands in his pants pockets.

The mist was relatively thin where they were, so they could see the silhouettes of the Musashi and the other nearby objects. From there, they would be able to reach the Musashi Chancellor without missing him.

Anayama smiled and remained just as motionless as the other three.

He only stared at the southern woods and Kakei bent his skinny body to talk to him.

“Retrieving the Musashi Chancellor here would earn us some points and be great publicity. Isn’t that the best option for-...”

“Let’s head back,” said Anayama without turning toward the others.

Rokurou of the metal fan swords tilted her head.

“Why? ...Hey, wait.”

As she spoke, Anayama began to walk toward the Musashi which was the source of the mist.

He said nothing, but he pointed to the south. The others looked there and saw a white and hazy trail in the afternoon sky.

“Cooking smoke?”

Isa tilted her head just before something resembling a spear flew from the woods.

It shot straight toward her face. She was slow to react and only managed a quick back step.

“Watch out.”

Unno reached in from the side and snatched it from the air, but that was when the four of them finally realized what it was.

...A skewer of meat!?

Pieces of meat were skewered by a whittled down piece of wood sixty centimeters long.

The meat was cooked, it spewed steam, and some salt had yet to dissolve into the grease.

“Ah.”

Inertia pulled the meat from the skewer, the skewer acted as a rail, and the forty centimeters of meat flew toward Isa’s face, piece after piece.

“You really need to watch out.”

Kakei grabbed the top and bottom of Isa’s head and opened her mouth. After several sounds of striking meat and several groans of “ah” or “nn”, all of the meat filled Isa’s mouth.

Kakei closed her mouth and lightly shook her head back and forth.

“Oh,” said Unno with a nod. “A little slower and she would have burned her face.”

“Ah...kh... You... Hot!”

“Make sure to chew, oldest. ...And that skewer really was nothing but meat.”

A moment after that comment, another skewer of meat appeared in front of Kakei’s face.

Eh? thought Kakei.

Someone tall stood in front of him. Their silver outfit resembled a Hexagone Française uniform.

It was an adult woman.

Her curly pale silver hair was swept back and she had almost fanglike bangs.

Her golden eyes moved in an arc to look across their group.

“Here.”

She offered the skewer of meat to them.

...Wait.

But...

...When did she get here!?

“Kakei!!”

Anayama turned around and his shout acted as a sign.

Kakei trembled and adjusted himself. He took in a breath and lowered his head without looking at the woman.

“Thank you.”

After taking in a long, cold breath, Kakei took the proffered skewer.

“My,” said the woman with a hint of a smile.

That smile only deepened in the corner of his vision.

It was a carnivorous but kind smile.

“I spotted a convenient boar, so I cooked it up. ...Wild board meat is wonderful, isn’t it?”

“I like it with miso flavoring.”

Kakei restrained the reaction that threatened to rise up within his heart.

He knew one thing for sure: he might be able to defeat this woman, but he would not escape unharmed.

If it did come to a fight, he would receive just as many – if not more – injuries.

“How about it?” she asked. “Your guns use spatial ejection to fire on your opponents at point blank range, don’t they? I was watching while lighting the fire earlier. ...So do you want to do this?”

She was tempting him and his heart just about gave in, so he took a deep breath.

Calm down.

This woman is an enemy. She knows it too.

But...

...She is in a very good mood right now.

He knew why: she had just eaten. She had hunted down and eaten a large prey in the wild, so she was satisfied. Her battle instincts were currently wavering.

She was non-human.

Hexagone Française’s non-humans did not simply eat humans. The higher level ones ate humans as their primary food source.

To her, he was nothing but prey. Her stomach was full, so her instincts were straying toward play rather than fighting.

But if she did not enjoy that play, she might kill him for fun and bury him so she could eat him later.

She was a beast.

That’s right, he thought. If I don’t provoke her, this won’t end up in a conflict.

...That is the Sanada way.

And so he restrained himself.

However, a sudden pressure moved to his right.

It was Isa.

...*Wait.*

Isa moved in the right of Kakei's vision. A god of war arm was spatially ejected on the outside of her right arm and the strike was already wrapped in wind.

"This is thanks for the meat!!"

Kakei saw a few different results of the strike.

First, the non-human woman turned her left palm toward Isa's god of war fist.

"Oh, dear."

There was a definite impact and sound of shaking, but the woman was not knocked away and Isa was not pushed back.

Isa and her god of war arm were lifted and held up in a single hand like a tree branch.

"...!?"

Before Isa could cry out in surprise, the woman casually tore into the metal fist's armor with her other hand.

The steel armor tore away like clay and the woman gently placed it between her small lips.

"Nm."

She bit of a piece like it was a rice cracker, moved her jaw up and down, and worked her throat.

...Is she going to swallow it?

Kakei saw the woman bite off and swallow the metal before narrowing her eyes.

“Far Eastern metal is rough and has a strong flavor...much like blood. Truly delicious.”

She tossed Isa away to place her hands on her cheeks, but she soon reached again for Isa and the god of war arm that rotated through the air.

“Oh, just a little more.”

She casually tore off another fistful of armor and placed a hand on Kakei’s head.

The hand on his hat was just as casual and she did nothing more than gently stroke the hat.

“You did well to prepare some food for me. If you hadn’t...”

She placed a hand on his ear and pinched it.

Before he could wonder what she was doing, she spoke with a smile.

“I was considering taking about this much as a palate-cleanser.”

Following her words, the woman disappeared and Kakei realized where she was headed based on the slight wind she left behind.

“The Musashi Chancellor!!”

Toori stood in the mist.

He had fallen to the ground from high in the air, but the shaking of the crust had caused the ground to crumble near the edge of the land port. Instead of hitting a stone wall or hard ground, he had been stopped by dirt and grass.

“This ain’t good.”

He could hear shellfire overhead and something hard clashing nearby.

“That’s an old-fashioned speech pattern and some weird speech pattern. Is it that samurai girl and that weird sunglasses guy?”

He posed and shouted up toward the Musashi’s silhouette.

“Heeeeeey! Little help down heeeeeere!! They can’t see me, can they!? This is hopeless! Dammit, but I’m not gonna let this stop me!”

Everyone on the Musashi could hear the idiot starting a one-man play down below. Kimi and the others who had been on the deck had now joined the rest at the outer loading entrance.

Toori was talking in the mist below.

“And when the girl came from the split bamboo, the old man held her in his arms and said, ‘Now, come back to my place’.”

“Judge. You can shoot him, Asama.”

Asama fired and a shout came from the mist.

“Th-that was close! What do you think you’re doing, titty shrine maiden! Is your shooting spirit that lonely!? That’s it, isn’t it!? Well, you leave me no choice. Brother Toori will sing you a song: Sniper, snipper, snipples, she’ll snipe you right in the nipples, that sniper shrine maiden.”

“Nwaaaaaah! That guy is using the international broadcast for a strange new singing debut!”

“Judge, judge.”

Horizon and Kimi both nodded twice and exchanged a glance.

“Based on his actions, it would seem he did not hit his head.”

“Heh heh. That’s right, Horizon. This is a perfectly normal sequence.”

“That doesn’t really matter,” said Asama as she looked around. “Urquiaga-kun is busy retrieving Adele, isn’t he? So who can go?”

Naito replied to her gaze by stepping forward with a sigh.

“I guess I’ll go. But it’s a little hard to tell where he is in the mist, so I apologize if I can’t do it immediately.”

“Oh, then I’ll go too!” added Mitotsudaira.

She had one silver chain grab onto the loading entrance railing.

“Um, well... I can locate him in the mist using his scent. And, Margot? Your broom can carry three, right?”

Masazumi noticed the surrounding atmosphere stiffen.

...Eh? What is this tension?

She knew what had caused it, but...

...Mitotsudaira is only trying to head down there, right?

The idiot had told her that Mitotsudaira was not disembarking due to a promise with her mother, but regardless of her family circumstances...

...This is an emergency.

So why were they so worried? Was there something more to this?

Kimi took a step toward Mitotsudaira.

“There is a lot I want to say. ...Pushing yourself is a sign of an excellent woman, but pushing yourself too far is what truly hopeless people do. If you understand that, then come here.”

She beckoned Mitotsudaira over. Mitotsudaira approached in confusion and Kimi held out Horizon’s head.

“She uses the same shampoo, so remember it.”

“Are you sure you don’t think I’m a dog?”

But after she sniffed Horizon’s head a few times to memorize the scent, Masazumi and everyone else backed away.

“She’s a dog.”

“Th-this is just to be sure.”

Her eyebrows rose and Asama stepped between her and the others. She told them all to calm down, patted the sides of Mitotsudaira’s shoulders, and smiled.

“We’re counting on you.”

“Eh? R-right. Judge.”

Seeing her confused nod, Masazumi took a breath. *Asama is good at giving us a quick breather*, she thought. She made up her mind when she noticed Crossunite and Mary approach from down the corridor. She decided to stop being suspicious and to remain positive.

“In other words, Naito will observe from above and Mitotsudaira will search down below?”

“Yes. At any rate, we need to hurry. ‘Musashi’, how long until the mist clears up?”

“Judge. The mist itself will calm down after about a minute longer. We still have three minutes until we leave port at 3:15. Be careful. Over.”

“I see,” replied Asama as she fired a voice-tracking arrow into the mist below.

Wait, wait, thought Masazumi while Asama turned toward her with a smile.

“He is down there, where the arrow vanished into the mist.”

“Y-you idiot! Don’t fire without warning like that! That nicked me in the crotch!”

“Anyway, chancellor, Mito-tsan and I are on our way.”

The Technohexen flew into the mist with the silver wolf riding on the back of the broom.

Toori sang and danced in the mist to let the others know where he was. He had a feeling an arrow flew his way every once in a while, but...

“Ha ha ha. Asama, you sure are kind deep down! You don’t actually try to hit me when the arrow has an arrowhead! Nice! You really are a good set of boobs!”

An arrow sans arrowhead struck him in the center of the chest and he sank fifty centimeters into the ground, but the idiot quickly hopped back to his feet.

“Wh-what the hell are you doing!?”

“Eh? I let Horizon shoot that one, so it doesn’t count. Okay, he’s around there! That one put a spell on him, so keep the tsukkomi coming. Today is international tsukkomi day!”

“D-damn that shrine maiden, she’s getting more and more skilled at our side of things!”

A new voice reached him from ahead.

“Um, wait, Tomo! Stop shooting! Stop!!”

“Oh? Is that you, Nate? Are you okay coming down here like this? Come on over to me and I’ll pat you on the head to reward you for making up your mind.”

“Eh? Ehhh? No, um, well, u-uh...”

“I’m here too!” announced Naito.

Based on the sound of the silver chain, Mitotsudaira was approaching up front and Naito was floating on her broom further back. The sound of the chain came from Naito as well, so it was likely connected to the broom to make sure they would not lose track of each other.

“Sorry about worrying you all.”

Toori sighed. Falling down had been unexpected, but his classmates were here to rescue him. He viewed them as a reliable group and he had a sudden thought while looking up into the misty sky.

...I didn’t get a chance to visit grandma.

He needed to say something so his classmates could reach him, so...

“♪Ah!”

He took a light step and sang a quick-tempo version of a song.

“♪Sanko, Sanko. How respected is your name.”

Toori sang the Sanko Bushi, a folk song of the Izumo region.

An old woman rested her elbows on the fence around a house in the rural area of central IZUMO. She faced a well-built elderly man who stood on the other side of the fence.

He was IZUMO Executive Chairman Izumo Yuu. He looked over at the long wooden container his companion carried on a large two-wheeled cart.

“Mitsu, your grandson sure can sing. I know he’s supposed to be an entertainer, but I thought he only had stupid jokes.”

“Entertainment began with Shinto rituals. He is a stupid grandchild, though.”

They listened to his voice.

Sanko, Sanko. How respected is your name. Beautiful though you are, you are no Sanko.

Ahh, are only gourds allowed to float? I too have floated some.

“Yes, yes. You floated. You floated. You’re floating.”

Oh, white crests of the ocean waves. Though the wind may blow, Sakai is a calm place that knows no storms

Ahh, if but one of Hattabata’s bean pods runs, they all run. You and I run together.

“Yes, yes. Run with me. Run with me.”

The song will tell you if the people of the land are in the know. The Sanko Bushi will tell you.

Ahh, the mountains, the great mountains, the sea, and Sakai.

The port of Sakai is built. Ships come and go with mountains of cargo. They come and go.

“Yes, yes. It flourishes, it flourishes.”

After finishing her interludes, Mitsu gave a quiet laugh.

“He didn’t visit this year, so is this supposed to make up for it?”

“What is that song? Well, I know it’s the Sanko Bushi that appears in Izumo during the Edo period. IZUMO even uses it in our ads. But why would that song be for you?”

“Judge. My mother more or less ran away to come here and I’ve heard this song ever since I was born. Of course, it wasn’t sung quite like this,” she explained. “Interesting lyrics, aren’t they? Sanko means geisha in the Izumo region. According to the Testament descriptions, it’s a local song about the love of a girl living in the port of the Izumo’s region’s city of Sakai and local variations are later made elsewhere.”

But...

“The song has a bit of an anti-establishment undertone to it. After all, Izumo’s geisha have a background in the kabuki theater of Okuni, which was primarily made up of wandering shrine maidens who had fallen from their positions at shrines. In other words, they were descendants of a Shinto group that opposed the establishment while calling themselves servants of the gods.

“Look at the lyrics. If they are no Sanko, it must be referring to a lower branch of the organization, right? And the gourd is a symbol of Hashiba, so what does it mean for it to float?”

“Yes, what does it mean?”

“As for the ocean, that would refer to the outside world in ancient times. So even if places outside Izumo are in turmoil, Izumo will remain tranquil. The bean pod is a symbol of the family, but as they are grown, only two pods are left while the others are culled. Also, running pods would refer to drawing one’s sword, wouldn’t it?^[4] And who is the one going along with that? Then a song of the land is sung to check where they are from and, at the very end, ships are sent from Izumo.”

She took a breath.

“It’s a nasty song. Some even say it’s prophetic. And some parts apply to the Musashi’s current situation.”

“For IZUMO, the Sanko Bushi is a song about the ever-recreated parting between land and ship. You shouldn’t get so worked up over the negative side, Mitsu.”

“Oh?” said Mitsu. “Is that so?”

Yuu tilted his head and she continued speaking.

“After the culling, only two bean pods remain and one of those will draw its sword from the scabbard as it faces Hashiba. So if destiny is making this song a prophecy, praying it isn’t so will be useless.”

Yes.

“Instead, we should wish for everyone’s happiness. That is all we can do as the culled ones.”

Toori took a breath after finishing his song.

“C’mon, how was it, everyone!? Praise me!”

Asama: “Wow, I’m surprised! I didn’t know you could do any proper performances! And I didn’t realize being ordinary could be so wonderful! Please do more of that from now on!”

Mal-Ga: “In fact, that’s a kind of performance you don’t see much of these days. I just hope it wasn’t a death flag.”

Vice President: “Wait, all of you. He’s definitely got some ulterior motive here.”

“What!? C’mon, Seijun! I don’t have anything like that! All I did was take off my pants!”

Five arrows flew in quick succession and Toori bent his body into a C and then an S to avoid them.

“Th-that was close! Nate’s over here too, remember!?”

The jangling of a chain and a voice reached him from behind.

“Oh, is this where you are?”

Toori noticed Mitotsudaira’s usual perfume in the chilly dampness of the mist. *It leaves a strong scent with so much hair*, he thought.

“Okay, I will be a little rough with the chain, so I hope that’s okay.”

“Eh? Ah...ah! I’m getting wrapped in a chain with my bottom half bare! I’ve never felt anything like it!”

Meanwhile, a chain wrapped around and around the top half of his body.

With a light tug back, the chain tightened.

Mitotsudaira’s voice then came from the front.

“My king, are you over there?”

“Eh? That’s not where you are. Aren’t you back there?”

“What?” asked Mitotsudaira as she approached from the front.

Meanwhile, Toori was pulled backwards where he heard a quiet laugh.

“You’ll have more fun over here.”

After being pulled back, he ran into the person standing there.

He recognized the scent coming from the person’s hair and the subtlety of the tugging force.

...*That’s Nate.*

With that realization, he gave himself over to her.

However, he noticed something inarguably different from Mitotsudaira. His back was pressed against her, but the back of his head sank deeply into something.

“These are on ultra easy! Wh-what happened to Nate!! Did she get an expansion pack!?”

As Toori looked up in surprise, the wind blew.

The mist cleared, so he could see in front of him now. He first saw Mitotsudaira approaching with a silver chain wrapped around a raised arm.

“My king!”

She was smiling, but...

“...!?”

That smile instantly froze and began to tremble.

What was going on?

She was looking behind him.

He then realized she was looking at the expansion pack there.

Wondering what it was, he turned his head to look.

“Huh? Nate?”

The woman looked like her, but she had breasts. She was tall, but she had breast. She had a mature face, but she had breasts. She had a lot of hair, but she had breasts. The breasts suggested she was a different person, but she had breasts.

“W-wait, my king! Why do you keep looking back at her chest each time you look at another part of her body!?”

“Hey, what is this!? If you’ve been hiding this, then bring it out sometimes! A change is nice every once in a while!”

“N-no! Look more carefully!”

He did as she asked and looked more carefully at the woman.

“So big...”

He was referring to her breasts and not her height. *A guy’s gotta follow his instincts*, he thought just before Mitotsudaira spoke.

“That is my mother!!”

“What?”

He was wrapped in a chain and his pants were below his knees, so he made a bowlegged pose and bent backwards to express his surprise. He then viewed the woman’s breasts from a distance with better perspective.

“She’s married!?”



Reine des Garous

Mitotsudaira watched her mother, who was unfazed.

“Testament,” she replied with a quick bow toward the Musashi through the mist. “Thank you for looking after my daughter for so long. I am Hexagone Française Vice Chancellor Turenne. Or perhaps I am better known as Hexagone Française’s Reine des Garous. I stand at the peak of the lupine races which have a history of eating humans.”

...Eh?

Surprise filled Mitotsudaira’s thoughts.

...The Reine des Garous? But...um...

This was the first she had heard of that and the rest was shocking as well.

She had no idea what was going on and she remained motionless as her mother looked her way.

The mischievous smile she had seen so often in the past was turned in her direction.

On top of that, her mother grabbed the chain-wrapped king’s shoulder to show him to her.

“Nate?”

The woman’s lipstick-covered lips bent like a bow.

“I will be taking Musashi’s Chancellor and Student Council President.”

Afterword

Okay, I made you wait a while for this one (I think). Here is Kyoukai Senjou no Horizon III.

This one had a recap section, so you should be fine even after the wait (I think). This one starts from IZUMO and you might be wondering what happens next, but a lot starts to move next time.

This was mentioned in the novel, but France had built a lot of momentum in this era. The other nations either hadn't outgrown the middle ages with their religious issues and mercenaries or their immature economy had fallen into chaos due to the Age of Exploration, but France had formed a solid foundation for their nation with agriculture.

France had no emperor or pope and they had little naval power, but they developed their own nation while the other nations destroyed themselves. England was another winner of this era because being an island nation prevented the others from interfering with them too much, but I think France also managed to grasp that flow of events and gained political and historical independence.

Anyway, time for a random email exchange.

"I've finished writing it, but don't you dare read it."

"Th-that's not a very nice opener."

"I think you can just discuss an unpleasant memory from your school days, but what do you want to do?"

"Well, I didn't have as tough a school life as all of you."

"Eh? You don't have a favorite subject or a story about a class? You really don't have anything? Eh? Nothing at all!? You poor thing!!"

"Y-you are the worst! Oh, but one time in biology class, we got to look at blood under a microscope. We were supposed to only cut our fingertip a little with a scalpel, but I gave myself a horrible gash and ended up with enough for everyone to use."

"Why did you cut yourself so badly? Were you checking to see if you were human?"

“No, it’s just that my idea of ‘a little’ was different from everyone else’s. They say no two people think exactly alike and I think it must be true.”

“I get the feeling you just like going for overkill.”

I also get the feeling this is an oddly philosophical afterword.

Anyway, the story has reached parent participation day. There’s still plenty more to go, but I’ll leave it with this:

“Who was pushing themselves too hard the most?”

The BGM while I worked was Juno Reactor’s Guardian Angel. I listened to it during a lot of III’s action scenes.

Now, just wait a little longer for Part B next month.

March 2010. A morning of light pollen.

-Kawakami Minoru